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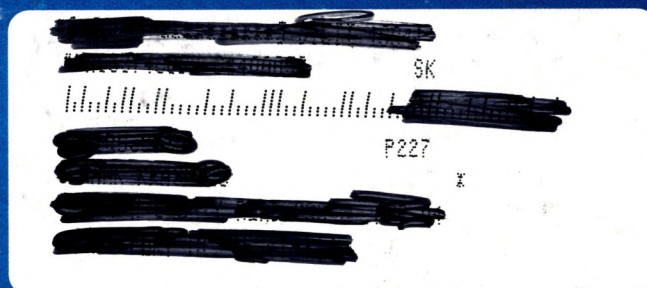
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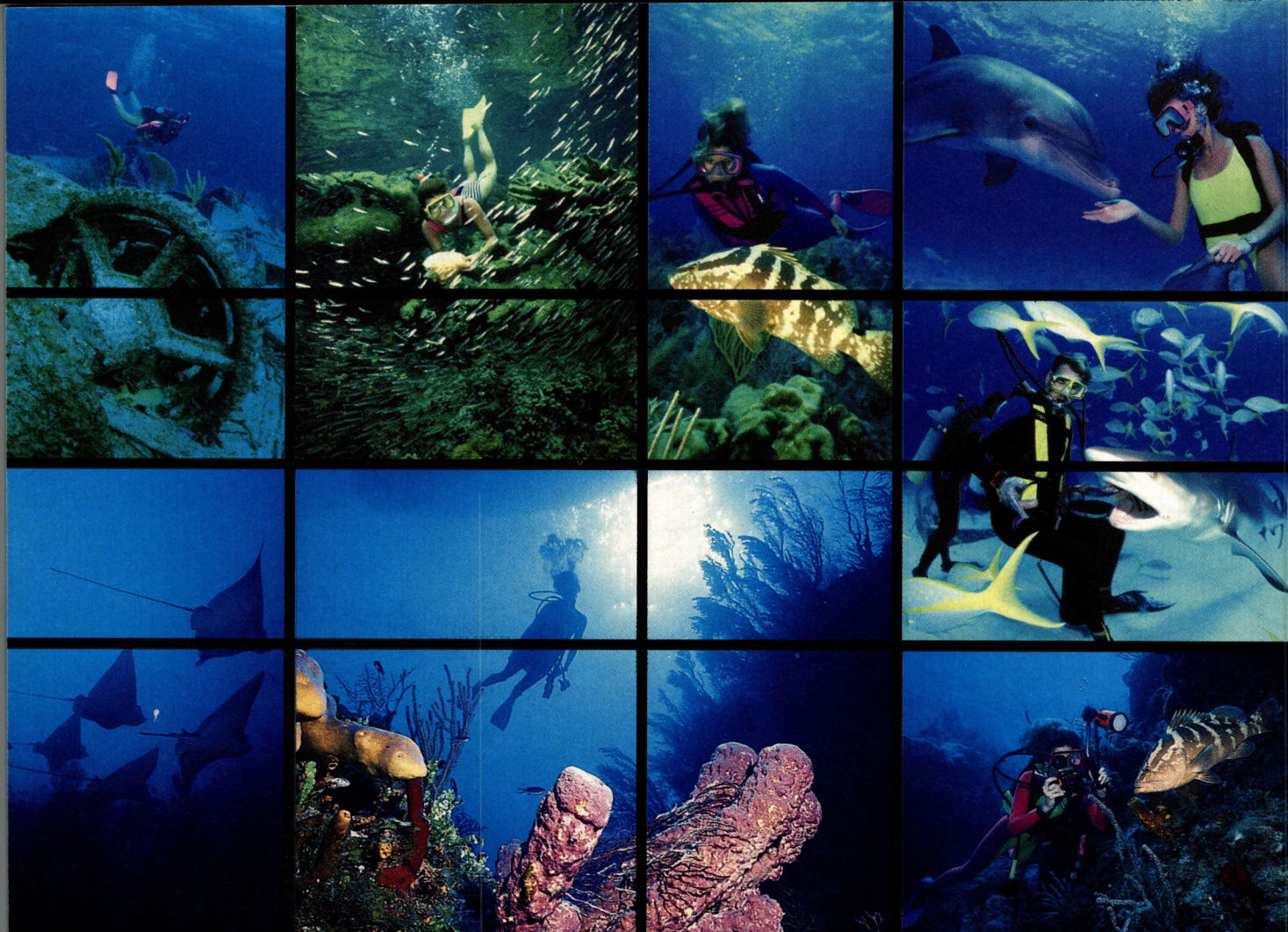


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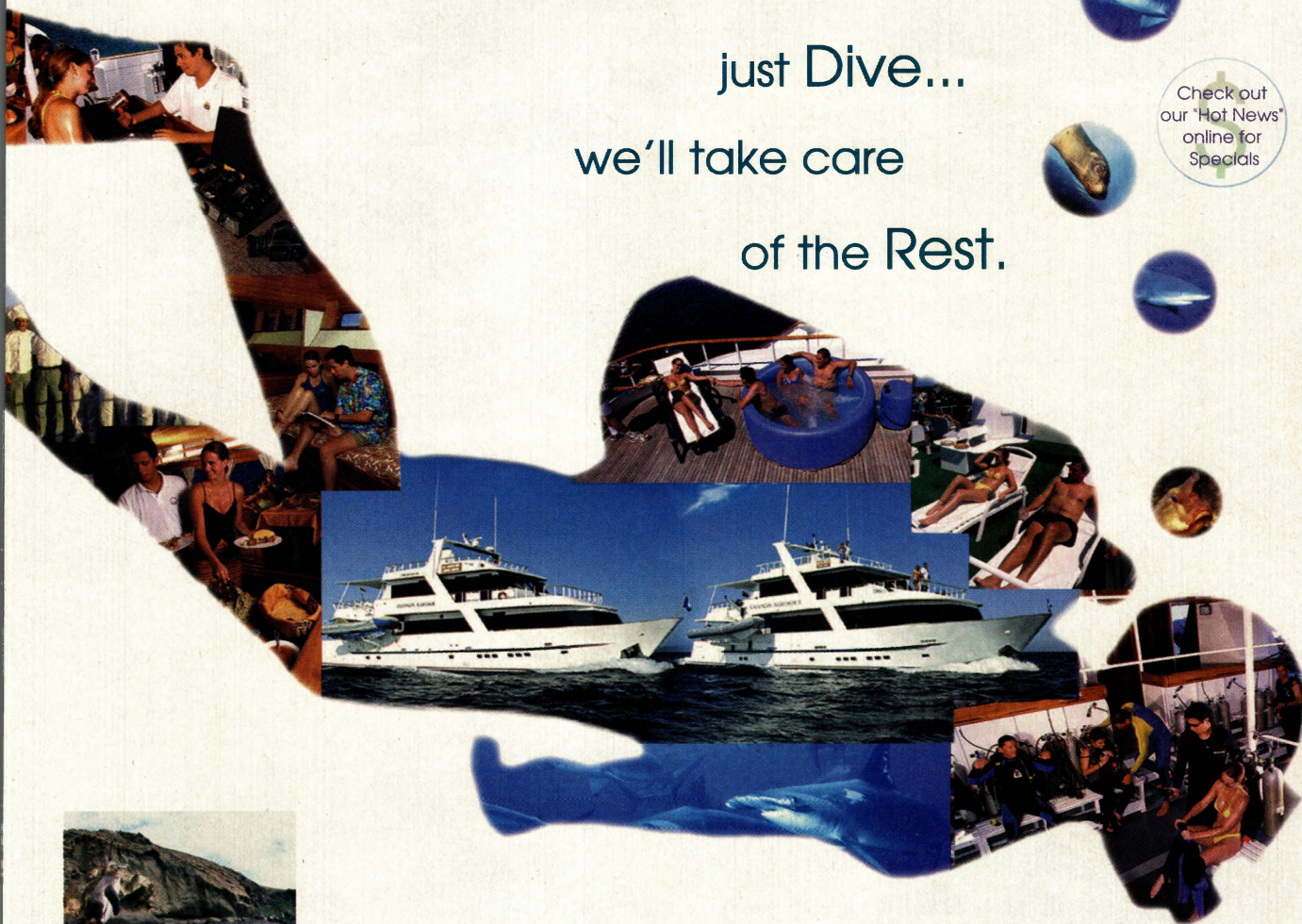
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ABOUT THE COVER:

Dive instructor Nienke Regenhardt freedives with Bottlenose Dolphins at UNEXSO, Grand Bahama Island.

Photo/Al Hornsby



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Background photo: A troupe of California Sea
Lions engaged in an underwater waltz.

Photo/Jack and Sue Drafahl



Skin Diver ON LOCATION



BIG ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

Whether you're a veteran or a novice diver, a big animal encounter is an occasion we all hold our breath for—*well, not really*. Remember or imagine your first encounter: A dark shadow looming slowly takes form, it moves closer, and suddenly, the moment is before you. But just as quickly as the moment is there, it's gone, and you are left, your mouth agape, with your regulator slipping from your lips.

Who better to understand the fascination we divers have with these leviathans of the sea than, well, divers. *Skin Diver* asked diver die-hards like Jonathan Bird, Brandon Cole, Chris Crowley, Tammy Peluso, Oakley Cochran and Stuart and Michele Westmorland to recapture their most unparalleled encounters. From chatty dolphins, smiling Manta Rays and cuddly manatees to mysterious Great Whites, mammoth Humpbacks and awesome Orcas, we've covered all the bases.

Encounter big animals, starting on page 53.



MALDIVES

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Discover the "Emerald Outposts," on page 82.



SEA OF CORTAZ

"That fish was as big as a bus—no, bigger!" "Yeah, as big as an airplane!"

Sound familiar? If you were young once too (*heh, heh*), you would have learned to fabricate the details with the best of them. But *Skin Diver*

and Marty Snyderman are here to tell you, we're not making this stuff up. The Pacific and the Sea of Cortez are stirring together at Cabo San Lucas, allowing for incredible encounters with Mobula Rays, Whale Sharks and schools of Hammerhead Sharks so thick they block out the sun—*really*.

See the proof in "Big Adventures in Cortez," on page 74.



U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Get "Seduced by the Virgins," beginning on page 42.

CONTRIBUTORS

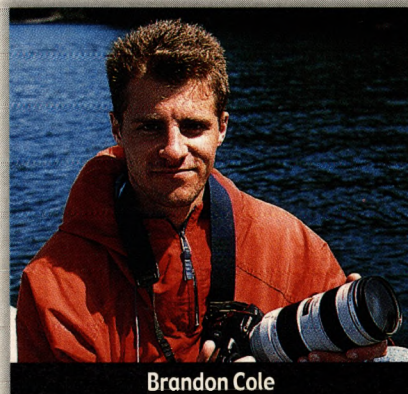
JONATHAN BIRD IS CURRENTLY WORKING on a film about the WWII battle and shipwrecks of Kwajalein Atoll in the Pacific. But when he's not busy making movies or producing award-winning television programs, Bird loves photographing one of his favorite animals: dolphins. On a recent *Skin Diver* assignment, Bird came to terms with his desire to be reincarnated as a dolphin, just because they have such a good time. "Dolphins are so good at finding food that they have a lot of time to spend socializing, snoozing and playing. How can you beat that?" 🐬



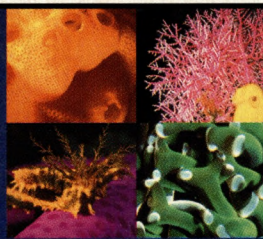
Jonathan Bird

BRANDON COLE, A 29-YEAR-OLD WILDLIFE photographer and writer specializing in the marine environment, lives in landlocked Spokane, Washington. His imagery from around the world includes a cetacean file with more than 20 species of whales and dolphins, and extensive coverage of other marine mammals.

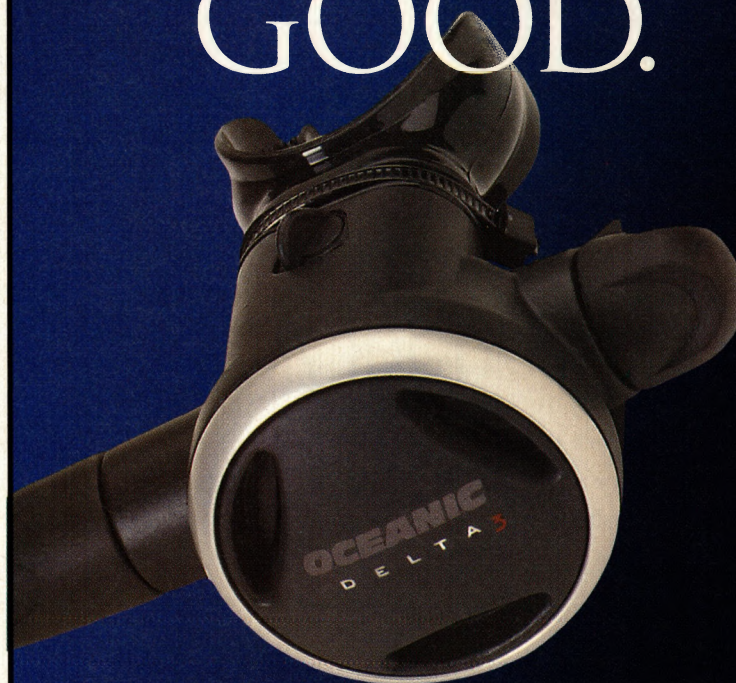
Cole set out to Crystal River, Florida, and managed to capture a manatee laying a big smooch on a snorkeler (page 62). A photo he might file under "Hunk of Burning Love." 🐬



Brandon Cole



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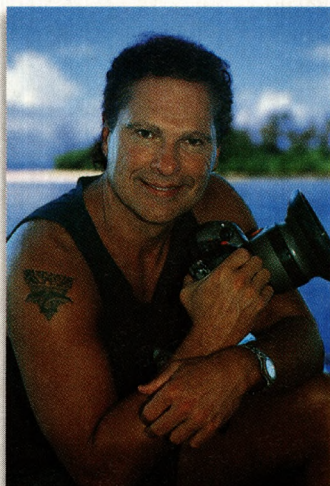
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WE ARE EXCITED ABOUT THIS MONTH'S THEME ISSUE, "BIG ANIMAL Encounters." The stories and images we have poured over in preparing the magazine are truly awesome. However, the timing of this issue, it turns out, is also a bit serendipitous.

At this moment, in the state of Florida (and also in several other areas around the world), an attack has been launched against the granddaddy of big animal diving—shark dives. A spearfishing group initiated a campaign through the state's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission that would ban all fish-feeding (except for chumming by fishing boats) in state waters, based upon the allegation that feeding dives will cause sharks to associate humans with food, and this association would lead to sharks attacking people in the areas where shark feeds occur. Despite the fact that thousands of shark dives

over many years in the Bahamas, Maldives and Tahiti have clearly shown this *not* to be the case, the promoters of the ban have cashed in on the public's fear and misconceptions about sharks in order

to drive the ban forward.

Sharks Under Attack

Not only is such a ban unnecessary from a safety point of view, but it would also deprive divers in Florida of

the enjoyment of feeding-based encounter dives of any sort. Even more importantly, it would deprive the dive community of perhaps its most powerful tool in educating the public about sharks and other large sea creatures, education that contributes mightily to their protection.

Recently, the dive community, through a group of dive operators, dive training professionals, dive magazine representatives and marine scientists called GIMEC (Global Interactive Marine Experiences Council), has gained the privilege of creating a set of guidelines for FWCC that would be used in carrying out feeding-based encounter dives (and eliminate the need for a ban).

As divers, we need to protect our individual and collective rights to enjoy feeding dives, and you are invited and urged to participate in this process. There are two things you can do: 1) Go to www.skin-diver.com where you will find the draft of "Florida Guidelines and Management Practices for Interactive Marine Experiences." Send your comments to Robert Palmer of FWCC at palmerb@gfe.state.fl.us; and 2) attend the public hearing in Palm Beach, Florida, on May 24, 2001, to speak out against this unnecessary ban (for the exact meeting location, go to www.state.fl.us/fwc).

Enjoy the issue and good diving! 🐠

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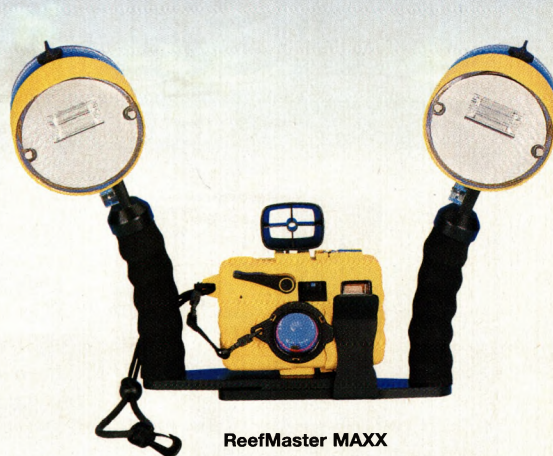
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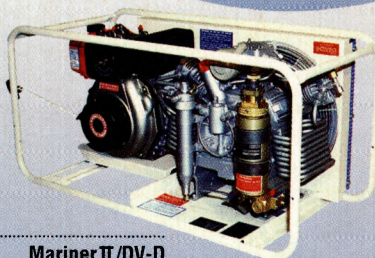
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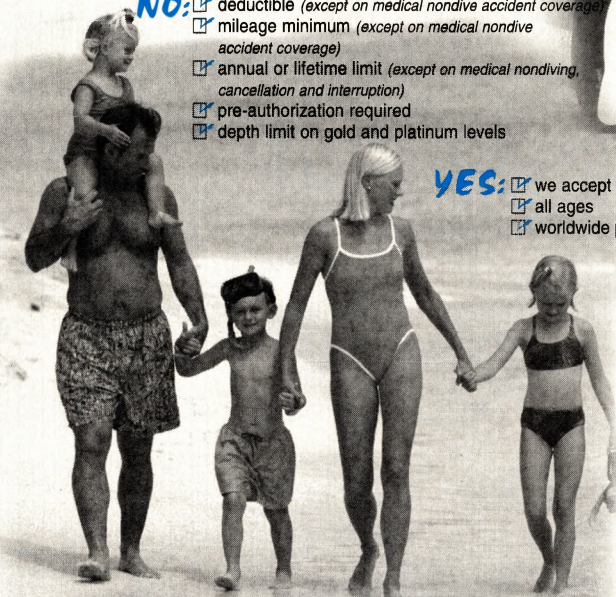
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Grand Prize: The winner's photo on the cover of the December 2001 issue of Skin Diver Magazine!

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To enter, submit each photograph with an entry fee of \$5 (check or money order). Multiple entries will be accepted. Each image submitted must be accompanied with an entry fee. Vertical, 35mm slides or medium format transparencies are preferred. **DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS JULY 15, 2001.**

Contest open to photographers of all levels. The editors of Skin Diver will select five finalist images. These images will be posted on Skin Diver Online by August 1, 2001, and Skin Diver readers will help select the winner. Runner-up photos will be featured in the December 2001 issue.

*For magazines mailed to subscribers only. Grand prize will include a first time use payment of \$800. Each submission becomes property of Skin Diver magazine (photos will not be returned). Skin Diver is not responsible for lost or damaged submissions. Entries submitted without entry fee will be disqualified.

TUSA

XPERT ZOOM

aeronautical engineering in the water



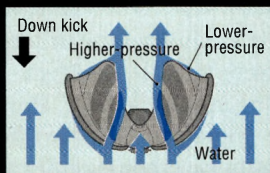
performance chart »

X-PERT ZOOM FIN

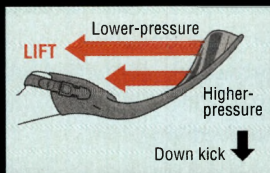
CONVENTIONAL FIN

technical specs

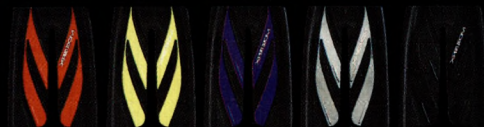
Traditional fins only use repulsive force to create propulsion. This normally means that in order to create strong propulsion, maximum effort is required, resulting in muscle fatigue not only for beginners, women, and middle-aged divers, but professionals as well. Added to which, the body moves left and right in reaction to the kicking needed to move forward, thus reducing propulsion.



The SF-8 has a blade that is split down the middle, so it takes the shape shown in the diagram when kicked under water. This special blade shape creates propulsion (lift) by generating a pressure differential above and below the blade, in addition to the repulsive force created by kicking. The SF-8 is a fin that allows all divers to create propulsion using only a small bent-knee kick, with a light rhythm.



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Amphitrite, Siren of Sunset Reef

Photos/Cathy Church



"AMPHITRITE, SIREN OF Sunset Reef" is the official name of the beautiful, nine-foot-tall bronze mermaid, recent-

ly submerged off Sunset House on Grand Cayman. For centuries, mermaids have served as perfect symbols of purity and serenity. The union of sea creature and beautiful woman, alluring but unavailable, may be one of the reasons why mermaids continue to intrigue us. They have been the subject of ancient legends and modern cartoons, and everyone can interpret them from their own perspective. But from my point of view, this special mermaid, Amphitrite, is simply wonderful to photograph.

She has traveled a long way to get to this idyllic home. Sculpted in Langley, British

Columbia, from 1987 to 1989, the statue was cast in Washington, then shipped to the Cayman Islands on November 11, 2000, where she was ceremoniously taken to her final resting place on Sunset Reef.

All of the fine details in sculptor Simon Morris' original sculpture were retained in the final bronze piece by using the ancient "lost wax" method of bronze casting. He took great care in the assembly of the cast pieces, using welding rods of the same alloy as the sculpture itself to avoid discoloration. Over time, the ocean water will slowly alter the patina (or coloration) of the entire sculpture, but it will always be unique. The statue weighs over 600 pounds and is secured to a concrete base resting between thick fingers of coral. She is one of only two that will ever be cast from this mold. Her sister, the Emerald Princess, is in British Columbia.

About 120 yards from shore, in front of the Sunset House, along a coral reef which quickly drops to 50 feet, Amphitrite can be found along the sand flat looking out toward sea. She is kept in good company by a pair of welcoming Gray Angelfish and other resident marine life. Just beyond her resting place, the wreck of the *David Nicholson* (a World War II landing craft), an 18th century canon, a 17th century Spanish anchor, an old ship keel and ancient ballast stones create an underwater exploration.

Her name, chosen by a high school freshman from Philadelphia in a contest, aptly fits the wistful rather than joyful expression that divers see in her face. The legend says that Amphitrite unwillingly became the object of Neptune's love, the god of the sea and earthquakes. She found him repugnant and went into hiding. However, Neptune sent a dolphin to find her and bring her to him to be his bride. They had three children, including fish-man Triton. Amphitrite is now commonly referred to as the Queen of the Sea, and to the habitants of Grand Cayman, the Siren of Sunset Reef. —Cathy Church

For more information on Amphitrite, go to www.sunsethouse.com.

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Belize Whale Shark Expedition 2001—May 5 & June 2

Tobacco Caye Diving presents Whale Shark expeditions during the months of May and June. The expeditions take place during the full moon, and to ensure sightings, a spotter plane will be chartered for this special event.

Mention *Skin Diver* and receive a free

bottle of rum or a T-shirt upon arrival.

For further information, contact Andrew Muha at (011) 501-14-9907 or visit www.tobaccocayediving.com.

Florida Underwater Archaeology Conference—May 11 to 13

The First Annual Florida Underwater Archaeology Conference will be

held in conjunction with the Florida Anthropological Society's annual meeting in St. Augustine, Florida.

For more information, visit www.staugustinelighthouse.com/maritime.

Celebrity Sail—June 2

James Cameron is the honorary chairman for this celebrity sailboat

Somebody's Watching You



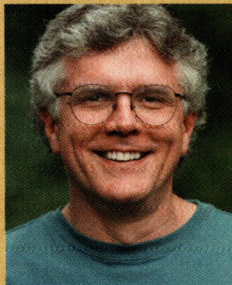
WHAT IS 70 FEET long, weighs 130 tons, is made of steel and has five pairs of eyes? No, it's not a new species of giant squid. It's the *Tiburon Martillo*, or *Hammerhead Shark*, a patrol ship station-

tioned in Darwin Island, one of the northern most islands of the Galápagos Archipelago, that will monitor illegal fishing activities and conduct local marine research.

The Galápagos Archipelago is considered one of the seven underwater wonders of the world. In his book of that name, author/photographer, Rick Sammon, quotes Marsh Sitnik of the Smithsonian Institution, saying that "...growth

in three areas—tourism, the local population and the fishing and lobster industries—poses an ever more serious threat to the marine environment of the Galápagos." That statement was made almost 12 years ago, but the issues remain the same today. The placement of the *Tiburon Martillo* is an example of the continued effort and diligence of the scientific and tourism communities to protect this precious habitat. Two marine biologists and three Ecuadorian soldiers, will inhabit the live-aboard laboratory.

Herbert Frei, Galápagos Aggressors' owner and conservationist, donated to the *Tiburon Martillo* and said that the Galápagos Aggressors, and other dive boats will supply the station every week. "[Advocating the *Tiburon Martillo*] establishes a permanent support from the dive tourism to the conservation of marine life of Galápagos," said Frei. —Tiffany H. Carey
For more information, visit www.aggressor.com.



Sammon Rap Session

RICK SAMMON, HOST OF THE ESPN'S PHOTO SAFARI AND AUTHOR OF THE AWARD-WINNING BOOK *Hide and Seek Under the Sea*, will be giving a live chat on www.kodak.com from the Jules Undersea Lodge in Key Largo, Florida, on June 27 from 8:00 to 9:00 PM. Sammon is revisiting the lodge and six other sites, which he calls the *Seven Underwater Wonders of the World*, to update and expand his list. He will also be checking the conditions of the reefs in Florida.

To ask Sammon questions about underwater photography—from a creative standpoint and from a business perspective—just log on to www.kodak.com and click on the chat window. Sammon is a seasoned pro who has explored the world and researched its reefs, now he's finding out what it's like to sleep underwater. He is also the president of CEDAM International (Conservation, Education, Diving, Awareness and Marine research).

Sammon will be joining *Skin Diver* in Honduras, from August 25 to September 1, where he'll be one of five photo pros at the Roatan Underwater Photo/Video Championship, sponsored by *Skin Diver* and the Honduras Institute of Tourism. —Tiffany H. Carey
For more information, visit www.skin-diver.com.

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race, taking place in Marina del Rey, California. Proceeds will benefit the Planetary Coral Reef Foundation, a non-profit organization founded in 1991 to address the worldwide demise of coral reefs through scientific research and education.

For more information and tickets, contact Lisa Precious at (818) 985-

6220 or visit www.pcrf.org.

Scuba Show 2001—June 2 & 3

Held at the Long Beach Convention Center in Long Beach, California, the 14th Annual Scuba Show will feature exhibits, films and seminars.

To find out more, call (310) 792-2333 or visit www.saintbrendan.com.

SEASPACE 2001—June 9th to 10th

SEASPACE will again be held in Houston, Texas this year, but in a new location, the Reliant Arena.

To find out more on this year's show, visit www.seaspace.org.

To submit a dive-related event for our Happenings section, e-mail allenr@emapusa.com.

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Letters

Readers Speak Out

A Recovered Wreck

It was with great satisfaction that I found Ellsworth Boyd's "Wreck Facts" in *Skin Diver* magazine again. I suppose I'm prejudiced since he mentions me in his column, but I always thought readers were interested more in diving wrecks than simply seeing pretty fish and colorful coral, which gets mundane after several years of diving.

When people ask me where I like to dive, they're always surprised when I tell them Japan, Alaska, Canada and the lower regions of South America. The water may be cold, but I prefer seeing underwater horizons that haven't been seen before.

The magazine looks great. Work hard to keep it the bible of divers. And thanks again for bringing Ellsworth back.

—Clive Cussler, via e-mail

Just for the Record...

Congratulations on the beautiful memorial issue of *Skin Diver* magazine, the 50th Anniversary issue, January 2001. However, we would like to make corrections of some errors printed.

On page 45, the last paragraph which continues on page 46, "...In August 1960, Art Ullrich in California and Ben Davis in Toronto formed NAUI..."

Actually, Ullrich and Davis were not the founders of NAUI; they were early leaders in NAUI.

On page 61, "In 1960, Auxier, Blakeslee and Hess decided the time was ripe to offer the first national instructor's course."

The original idea that Neal Hess had planned on was designing the organization as an offshoot from the YMCA program that had been founded in

1958. But Al Tillman, Hess and John Jones, Jr. eventually decided that NAUI could stand on its own and use Jones' Broward County program and Tillman's L.A. County program as the foundation for building NAUI.

Also on page 61, it was stated, "...Jim was a founding member of

Los Angeles Underwater Photographic Society; Chuck was an organizer of their annual film festivals."

True, Jim was a founding member of the Los Angeles

Underwater Photographic Society and so was Chuck. And they did sponsor the awards, but they didn't originate the idea. The International Underwater Film Festivals were created, produced and directed by Al Tillman and Zale Parry.

—Al Tillman & Zale Parry, Anacortes, WA

Freaky Desires Satisfied (see pg. 82).

I have been reading *Skin Diver* magazine for three years now. Being a dive "freak" myself (250 dives in three years time all over the world), I cannot help wondering why you guys never have published an article about the Maldives (besides the live-aboard vessels). During the last two years, I have spent a total of nine weeks in the Maldives, and I am scheduled to go back this year.

I know that your magazine caters to the taste of the American public, and having all these wonderful places like Belize, Roatan, Hawaii, etc., within a short distance makes the Maldives a lesser visited destination. But, it should not be forgotten.

Keep up the good work. Your magazine is top.

—Vincent Himpe, via e-mail

Tell us what you think. Send your thoughts by e-mail to skin-diver@emapusa.com, the website at www.skin-diver.com or via snail-mail to Letters to the Editor, *Skin Diver*, 6420 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90048.



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Before the Ice Melts

BY JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU



Photo/Geri Murphy

UNTIL THE 1970s, THE ARCTIC WAS considered a desert. We knew of polar bears and Right Whales, but were still fairly ignorant about life beneath the pack ice.

Then, largely through the research of Melnikov and other scientists, we came

140,000 individual animals in one cubic meter of ice. Not bad for a biological desert!

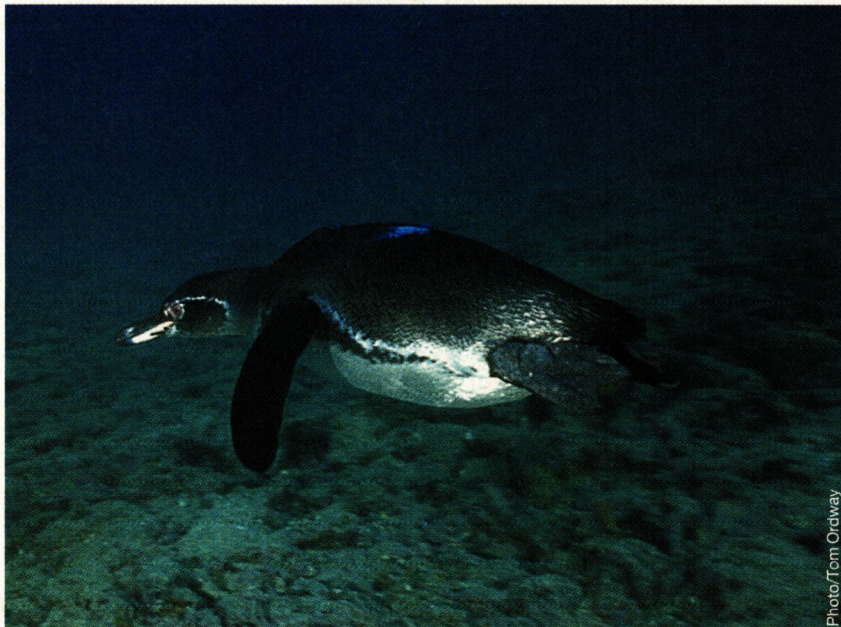
But now, ironically, humankind may be helping to make a desert where we once believed one to be.

A recent report in the journal *Science* describes the momentous impact of climate change on ecosystems in the far north. Here global warming proceeds three to five times faster than in the middle latitudes. As is now well-known, last summer a Russian icebreaker found nothing but open water at the North Pole.

The author, Kevin Krajnik, reports that ice covers 15 percent less of the Arctic today than in 1980. Fifty years ago it averaged 10 feet thick. Today, it has shrunk to six. In other words, the earth isn't just "thinning," it's *balding*.

Already the meltdown is having a devastating effect on wildlife. Krajnik describes entire caribou herds falling through thin ice and drowning. He finds murrelets being killed by swarms of mosquitoes, now able to thrive in the far north. He exposes the underbelly of the icepack, where melted freshwater favors algae at the expense of diatoms, thus robbing the food chain of its basic building block. He sees ringed seal pups on faltering floes dumped into the fatally frigid sea. He laments the plight of the black guillemot, a land bird that feeds on ever fewer and ever more distant packs of ice.

And most shockingly, perhaps, he speculates about the seemingly inevitable decline of the polar bear. Due to earlier melts, they are forced to abandon their dens and feeding areas on the pack ice prematurely. Krajnik



Photo/Tom Ordway

Penguins are among the many Arctic species potentially affected by changes in polar climate.

to understand the finely tuned web of life that persisted, miraculously it seemed, in the harshest of conditions.

Algae, diatoms, krill and ctenophores were the foundation of life here, producing a seasonal rain of organic matter that sustained Arctic Cod and clams, which in turn supported larger creatures like the Walrus, Narwhals and seals. And these, in the end, fed the indigenous peoples, such as the Inuit.

And that's just the life *below* the ice. It took awhile to understand that the surrounding whiteness was itself alive. At one point, scientists recorded

observes a 15 percent decline in the weight and number of cubs over the past two decades.

This article joins others from around the world to form a blizzard of chilling evidence. Glaciers are melting down in the Himalayas and Alaska. Icepacks are receding unseasonably in the Chukchi Sea. And in Antarctica, a significant ice sheet in the interior of the continent seems to be on the move.

For the first time, scientists have demonstrated that glaciers within the West Antarctica Ice Sheet are losing large amounts of ice, thus contributing to a rise in sea levels around the globe. As reported in *The New York Times*, some 7.5 cubic

miles of ice have melted in a mere eight years—an unprecedented amount—according to scientific observers. In all, the glacier has thinned by nearly 36 feet.

What does it all mean? The consequences of polar warming may remain impossible to predict with absolute certainty, but they are not a total mystery.

If large areas of polar ice disappear, the Earth will lose much of its ability to reflect solar radiation. More absorbed radiation means even higher temperatures.

Glacial melting dumps freshwater into the ocean. In large amounts, this influx may slow the transfer of heat via the conveyor belt of ocean currents such as the Gulf Stream, which supplies Europe and North America with abundant fish and a temperate climate.

In addition, when polar ice melts, the sea level rises. A melting of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet could cause the sea-level to rise as much as 45 feet. And even the separation of a large

chunk can cause a moderate change. While scientists assure us that it will take several centuries for this to happen, the prospect is bad news for the growing billions who crowd the coastal flood plains of the world.

Once these mechanisms have gained momentum, all bets are off.

Few of us dive in the Arctic or



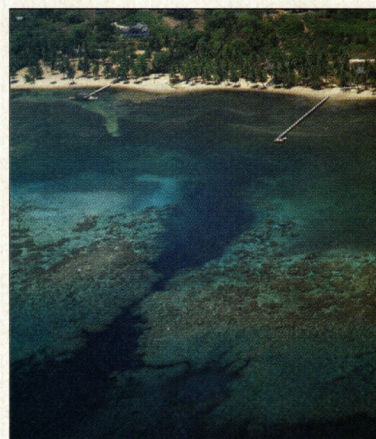
Photo: Brandon D. Cole
Immediate action on our part to save the Arctic would give this Beluga Whale something to really smile about.

Antarctic. But we should be very concerned about events there. Many of the creatures we most enjoy observing are nourished by the polar food web. And all marine organisms—the Nautilus of Palau as much as the Dugong of the Comoros—are affected by changes in global climate. The havoc wrought by successive El Niños should have taught us a thing or two about the caprices of ocean currents.

On a deeper level, I worry that as we have seen in rainforests and on coral reefs, we are helping to destroy another major ecosystem before we even fully understand it.

The poles are wonderful laboratories. But their story will be meaningless unless we are willing to use this information to make real progress on reducing our contribution to global warming. We cannot undo the past, and to a great extent, we cannot undo the immediate future. But decisive and immediate action can still prevent the Arctic from becoming the wasteland we once thought it to be.

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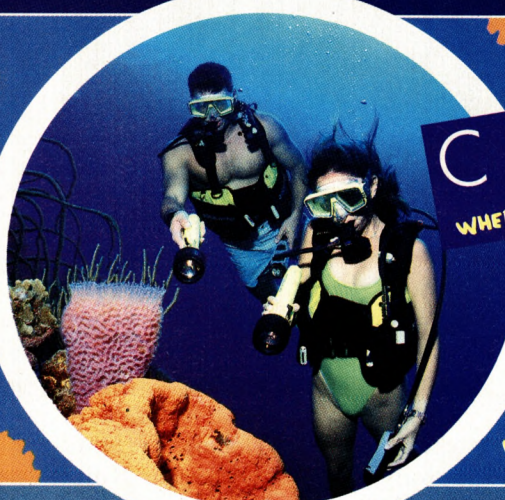
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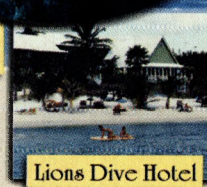
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Photo: Remyanthony Barby

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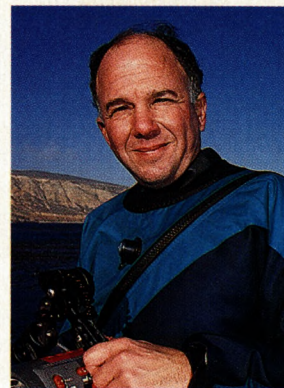
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Be Ready for Mr. Big

BY MARTY SNYDERMAN



Last month I was diving in the Galápagos when a Whale Shark showed up at the stern of our boat. I had never dived with an animal larger than a grouper and I got flustered. By the time I got my act together I was too late to get the pictures I wanted. Any advice for next time?—Bonnie, Nashville, TN



I APPRECIATE BONNIE'S CANDOR, AND she can rest assured she isn't the first photographer to have this experience. Having been there a few times, I think I can offer some advice that will help Bonnie and you take advantage of a photo op with Mr. Big. One of the wonderful things about big, wild ani-

However, you can use the photographs that other photographers have created and look at films about big creatures (like the IMAX films produced by Howard and Michele Hall) to develop ideas about the types of images you might like to create. What would those images look like?

Admittedly, things aren't likely to go according to your plan, but it is much easier to deviate from an existing plan than it is to create one on the fly. And it never ceases to amaze me how various elements of a "photographic plan" jump to the forefront of my mind in the middle of a dive when I have made and reviewed a plan.

Prep Time

Set up and test your gear. You want your cameras loaded with film, strobes charged and tested, and you want to have the light meter set up with your film speed dialed in. When possible on dive boats, try to keep a few extra rolls of film accessible in the event that you finish your wide-angle roll and just as you exit the water, Mr. Big shows up. Being familiar with your gear so you can change film and solve problems quickly can make or break you.

Lighting

Try to get on the sunlit side of the animal, unless you are going for a silhouette. This might sound like an

Encounters with Manta Rays and Whales Sharks come quick and fast, and photographers need to be ready.

mals is no one really knows when or where they will show up. So, be mentally prepared ahead of time. I realize that if you have never had a chance to dive around whales, sharks, dolphins, manatees, Manta Rays and the like, it can be a bit of a catch-22 to suggest that you prepare yourself mentally.

Getting Started: Tips to Help You Photograph Your Diving Buddies

A lot of divers take up underwater photography so they can take pictures of their diving buddies. In some respects, photographing divers is easier than working with marine life because you can always ask for, and usually get, some degree of cooperation from your intended subject. But let's face it, underwater most of us look a bit awkward. With a lot of bulky equipment, a 2nd stage stuffed in our mouths and color combinations that you aren't likely to see on the cover of GQ, it's not easy to make divers look "pretty."

Equipment: In general terms, point-and-shoot cameras are ideal for creating photographs of divers and diver-sized subjects. Cameras like Sea&Sea's MX-5, Ikelite's Aquashot 3 and the SeaLife ReefMaster come with lenses that have a focal length in the range of 30 to 35 mm and are well-suited for photographing subjects two to six feet away from the camera.

Positioning: The most important bit of sage advice that I have to offer is to photograph divers doing something divers naturally do, such as observing or interacting with marine life, taking pictures, bagging a lobster or exploring a shipwreck. Avoid shots that look "posed."

Eye contact: When you can, try to get a little strobe light into a diver's mask so that the viewer can see the emotions revealed in facial expressions and eyes. You

will need a clear path between your lens and your subject's face as well as a clear path between their face and your strobe. When you can, you want to avoid the syndrome of a blackened mask. Try to light up your buddies' faces.

Cropping: Try not to cut out, or "crop," legs at the ankle or knee, or arms at the wrist or elbow. As a rule, you want to show divers from head to fin tip, from the waist up, bust up or neck up.

Angle: Get down and shoot at a slightly upward angle when possible. An upward angle of orientation often adds dramatic appeal to an image.

Stuff that gets in the way: Keep extraneous hoses, gauges and other pieces of gear out of the immediate foreground. Foreground objects often dominate viewer attention, so unless your buddy's console is the primary subject of your shot, do what you can to keep it out of the immediate foreground.

Safety in numbers: Shoot a lot of pictures. If you take 10 frames of a single subject doing a specific activity such as a diver feeding a Southern Stingray at Stingray City in Grand Cayman, odds are you will like the composition, exposure and focus better in one or two of the 10 frames than you will in all the rest. No one gets their best possible shot the first time, every time.

odd piece of advice, but no strobe will light a Whale Shark, Great White Shark or other big animal from head to tail. You can illuminate a face or tail, but a strobe cannot evenly light such big animals. So, if you are able to, take advantage of the sun.

Background

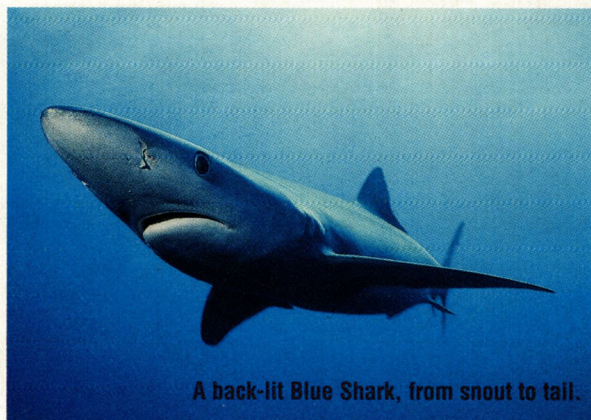
Do what you can to avoid framing a big animal against the dark underside of a boat, a dark reef in the distance or the darkly hued sea floor. Shooting big animals against blue water backgrounds can help your subject stand out in your frame.

Framing

Try framing the animals so that you are shooting them coming toward you, but if they get past you, be aware that tails can provide some great subject matter. No doubt about

it, we can't swim as fast as Mr. Big, and you can lose your window of opportunity by trying to do too much. Try to work on a few shots and bracket your exposures for the opportunities you do get. And when composing, try to avoid falling into the trap of putting the leading part of the animal's head dead center in your frame. Often that means you inadvertently crop the tail out of the picture.

Think silhouettes. Whales, sharks, dolphins, Manta Rays and the like are perfect subjects for creating dramatic silhouettes. You might want to try to frame them in the sunburst to



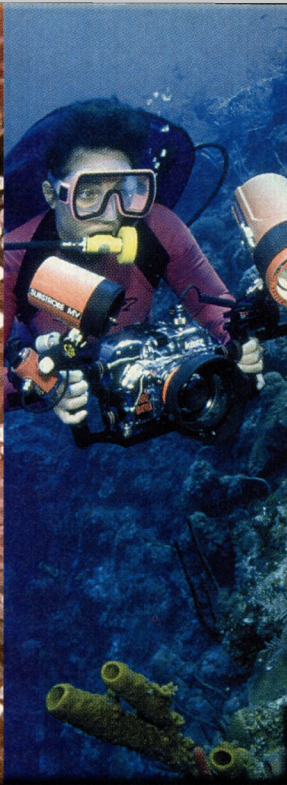
A back-lit Blue Shark, from snout to tail.

take advantage of the added appeal of shimmering rays of sunlight.

By far, the most important piece of advice I have to offer is don't let your photography rob you of the experience. No matter what the degree of your photographic success, be sure to enjoy the good fortune of swimming with Mr. Big. 🐟

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY?

Take an online course at Marty Snyderman's School of Underwater Photography at www.skin-diver.com. This comprehensive course consists of nine interactive classes taken at your convenience.



Substrobes

Designed and built in the USA for both the professional and amateur photographer, Ikelite offers six models of underwater strobes to meet different needs and budgets.

Substrobe AQ/S designed for the Aquashot series of camera housings.

Substrobe A35 designed for the Auto35 system.

Substrobe 50 (TTL) is the smallest, brightest and fastest recycling strobe in its class. Ideal for macro and lenses as wide as 28mm. Four "AA" batteries delivers 200+ shots.

Substrobe 100A (TTL) is a powerful medium size strobe with adjustable angle of coverage from 80° to 95° covering a full range of lenses from 15mm to macro. Soft-Lite reflector* and built-in modeling light. Uses four "D" alkaline or rechargeable pack to deliver 160+ shots.

Substrobe 200 (TTL) offers state-of-the-art electronics, 200 watt-sec., an incredible 1.6 sec. recycle time and ultra-wide 100° coverage. Soft-Lite* reflector and built-in modeling light. Ni-cad batteries deliver 160+ flashes and recharge in 2.5 hrs. LED film gauge shows number of rolls of film that can be exposed with remaining charge.

Substrobe 400 (TTL) is the most powerful strobe offered, producing 400 watt-sec. and covering 110°. Especially suited for wide angle photography. Soft-Lite* reflector, built-in modeling light. Ni-cad module delivers 150+ flashes.

* Soft-Lite reflector provides rich reds, oranges and warmer flesh tones.

Light



TTL Slave

Most avid photographers use two strobes for more natural lighting and this remarkable device eliminates the need for a dual cord. Full TTL functions are provided through slave sensors enabling the second strobe to be moved freely and positioned virtually anywhere without the inconvenience of a connecting cord.

Connects only to Ikelite Substrobes.

Digital Meter

The DM 4200 is both a light and a flash meter.

A light meter is one of the most important tools a photographer can own. The key to great underwater photographs is the balance between available light and fill flash. The photographer must start with a meter reading of the available light to properly set the camera aperture. Then the proper strobe power and strobe-to-subject distance can be selected. Use a light meter to achieve balanced lighting and your acceptable photographs can become great photographs.



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gear and gadgets

by Ryan Allen

NIKON'S ACTION SERIES BINOCULARS

Although some might disagree when it comes to SUVs, there's nothing wrong with making big...bigger. And that's what Nikon's Action Series binoculars aim to do, with new high-optical specifications.

These newly styled binoculars utilize a high-resolution aspherical lens system engineered to provide a clear, distortion-free image over the entire field of view. The eyepiece design also makes many models eyeglass friendly. And like all Nikon central-focus binoculars, this series features a diopter control for total viewing consistency. This control is designed to compensate for common left eye/right eye vision imbalance.

Nikon Action Series binoculars incorporate multi-layered, anti-reflective lens coatings engineered to deliver optimum brightness, high contrast, true color rendition and flare-free viewing. They are constructed with an all-metal chassis and lens fittings housed in a tough, lightweight polycarbonate body shell. Each model is covered by a 25-year limited warranty.

Nikon Sport Optics: (800) 247-3464 or www.nikonusa.com



BLUEFIN VX2000

Could someone please tell the sea bass to stop blocking the starfish! If you're looking to upgrade your imaging gear, check out Light & Motion's newly designed Bluefin VX2000 housing for Sony's three-chip VX2000 and PD150 camcorders.

Bluefin's feature set includes access to program AE, shutter speed, white balance, audio level, exposure and the ND filter. An additional accessory is a remote monitor that allows for housing operation from up to 300 feet away. Need voice communication to the surface? Bluefin VX2000 also includes an EOS port ready to accept an underwater communication system.

The housing can be purchased as a stand-alone or in one of two travel packages including HID or halogen lights.

All travel packages contain lights, NiMH batteries, multi-voltage fast charger, O-ring kits and a custom Pelican case with pull out handle and wheels.

Now, if you could only get the mermaids to show up on time!

Light & Motion: (831) 645-1525 or www.uwimaging.com



SUUNTO MOSQUITO

The Suunto Mosquito looks like a watch, but dives like a computer. This wrist-top dive computer comes with complete air and nitrox capability, a separate freediving mode and watch functions (including a stopwatch). Streamlined and lightweight with an easily replaceable battery, it is suitable for all kinds of diving and is water-resistant to 330 feet.

In Air mode it is an advanced dive computer with full decompression capability. In addition to dive functions, it provides memory capabilities, profile recording and dive planning operations. The logbook can keep up to 36 hours of diving, and a lifetime dive history is also recorded. Using the Suunto Reduced Gradient Bubble Model (SRGBM) for decompression calculations, the model can be adjusted using personal settings.

In Nitrox mode, the Mosquito provides the same functionality as the Air mode, but also enables the use of nitrox mixtures with an oxygen content of 21 to 50 percent. The Mosquito has an adjustable PO₂ limit and tracks oxygen exposure.

There is also a Freediving mode with a two-second depth and time recording interval. Scuba and freedives are kept in separate profile and history memories. The Mosquito is PC-interface compatible, and the Suunto Dive Manager software can be downloaded free of charge on the website. **Suunto: (011) 358-9-875-870**
www.suunto.com 




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
Malcolm Product Development Co.: www.maskconnectionsystem.com 



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Pelican's L1 LED flashlight provides 50,000 hours of there-when-you-need-it light. Using four LR 44 1.5V alkaline coin cells (included) for 100 hours of battery life, its bright, concentrated beam is perfect for checking your gauges on a night dive or midnight nature calls on the boat. The L1's one-hand operation enables quick activation for momentary blink mode or a continuous light beam with a convenient end switch. And there is a nifty break away neck lanyard enabling you to keep the light handy at all times.

The compact size is ideal for assembling or repairing gear in close, dark areas. There is also the option of a pocket clip attachment. Three color beams for night vision preservation and two body colors (black and yellow) are available.

Built tough to perform in severe weather conditions, the L1 is both waterproof and corrosion-proof. And, Pelican promises an unconditional "Lifetime Guarantee of Excellence." **Pelican Products: (310) 326-4700 or www.pelican.com** 



The Trouble with Trimix

BY KARL SHREEVES



MY REACTION AFTER RETURNING FROM MY first trimix dive in the early 1990s was, "This is just what we need." In the past, I'd made working dives to 220 feet on air and had been fairly narced to say the least. On this run, I'd been clear-headed at 250 feet. I knew that from then on, I'd never dive to such extreme depths on air.

During the 1990s, the tek diving community embraced trimix (oxygen, helium and nitrogen) as the accepted gas for diving deeper than 200 feet, and diving on air to 240 feet went from macho to moronic. Unquestionably, trimix has made deep tek diving safer. Today, the tek diving community agrees almost universally on the following standards:

deeper than 165 to 200 feet: The exact cutoff point varies from one group to the next, but below this range, air/EANx is not acceptable at all; the community practice is to use trimix at these depths.

In Between

You might notice a gap in the prevailing tek community practice—the gap for open water diving between 130 feet and 165 to 200 feet. Air or trimix? Most of the tek community considers air/EANx acceptable to at least 165 feet in open water for noncomplex dives, but a minority adamantly insists that all dives deeper than 130 feet (some even say 100 feet) require trimix. Since few

Cost is a factor, but not a good argument against using trimix. There are real, practical reasons unrelated to cost.

Less Forgiving

The primary concern about trimix is that helium is a light gas that diffuses rapidly. It is far less forgiving of decompression procedure errors than nitrogen. More than a few tek divers can attest to helium's bending potential because they've had a DCS occur before they hit the surface. This rarely happens when decompressing from an air/EANx run. Because helium diffuses rapidly, it loads your tissues more rapidly during the dive and more readily unloads during ascent and decompression.

Using trimix, your ascent rate becomes more critical and so does maintaining stop depth because a rapidly diffusing gas more easily forms bubbles if you screw up. A diver who accidentally bounces 20 feet above stop depth and quickly returns is more likely to get away with it decompressing from an air/EANx dive than a trimix dive. Some may argue this shouldn't happen, but it does with new and experienced tek divers alike. And it's in the 130 to 165-180 range that novice tekks gain the deco diving training and experience that trimix demands.

At times, even highly experienced trimix qualified tekks will opt for air (or EANx) in the 130 to 165-180 window. If conditions are rough enough to cause an erratic decompression, a more forgiving nitrogen-oxygen mix may reduce DCS risks. In training tek divers, many instructors prefer air/EANx so they can assist a student with depth control problems and have less bubble trouble concerns. So while trimix reduces the narcosis risk, it increases the DCS risk—in



Photo/Michelle Van Vliet

- For general open water and overhead environments to 130 feet: Air or enriched air nitrox (EANx) is acceptable. Qualified tek divers switch to trimix as shallow as 100 feet for complex dives or dives in difficult environments.

- For overhead/complex environments deeper than 130 feet: Air/EANx is not acceptable; these environments call for trimix to reduce narcosis.

- For general open water environments

would argue against the benefits of reducing narcosis, one might wonder why the whole community doesn't agree. The reason is that trimix, while a wonderful tool, isn't a cure-all. Just as air has drawbacks and risks, so does trimix.

Cost

One immediate argument is that trimix costs more. While trimix has some concerns, this isn't one of them.

some circumstances, substantially.

But what about the narcosis? The always-trimix argument revolves around narcosis, but there's another side. First, the added narcosis (to no deeper than 165 feet) is not substantially more than 130 feet for most divers in many environments, especially those suited to new tekks and training them. It's only one atmosphere more, and the European dive community has used 165 feet as the recreational limit (not 130 feet) for years without the safety equipment and higher-level training the tek community now calls for.

All-trimix proponents say narcosis creates a false sense of security, and it can in the untrained, unwary diver. However, trimix also creates a false sense of security for those who believe it will eliminate human error or who dismiss the added decompression risks. And, trimix *reduces*, not eliminates, narcosis.

Never Say Never

As mentioned, virtually the entire tek community agrees that overhead environments (cave or wreck) deeper than 130 feet always call for trimix. And, complex environments magnify narcosis concerns. While it's reasonable for most tek divers to use air/EANx to 165 feet in calm, open tropical water, a cold, high-current, low-viz dive to 140 feet in the North Atlantic may not only call for trimix, but not be a suitable dive at all for the novice tekker.

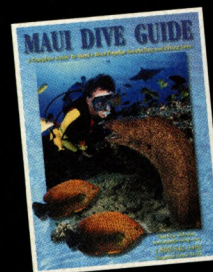
So, while most tek divers no longer use air/EANx for deep penetration or dives below 165-180 feet, they recognize an overlapping range where one might use air/EANx or trimix, depending on the diver, the dive demands and the risk/benefits. The wise diver uses the right tool for the job. An extreme position either for or against trimix or air or EANx not only disregards the relative risks/benefits of using each in varying situations, but ultimately undermines tek diving safety by denying divers the appropriate tool for the task. 🐠

Karl Shreeves is VP, Technical Development, for DSAT and PADI. He made his first helium dive in a chamber in 1978, and now tek dives with trimix, enriched air or air, depending on what the dive calls for.

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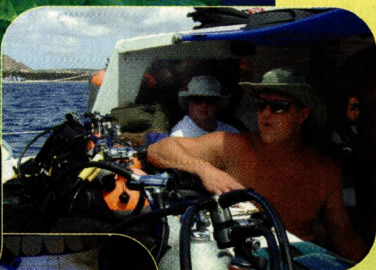
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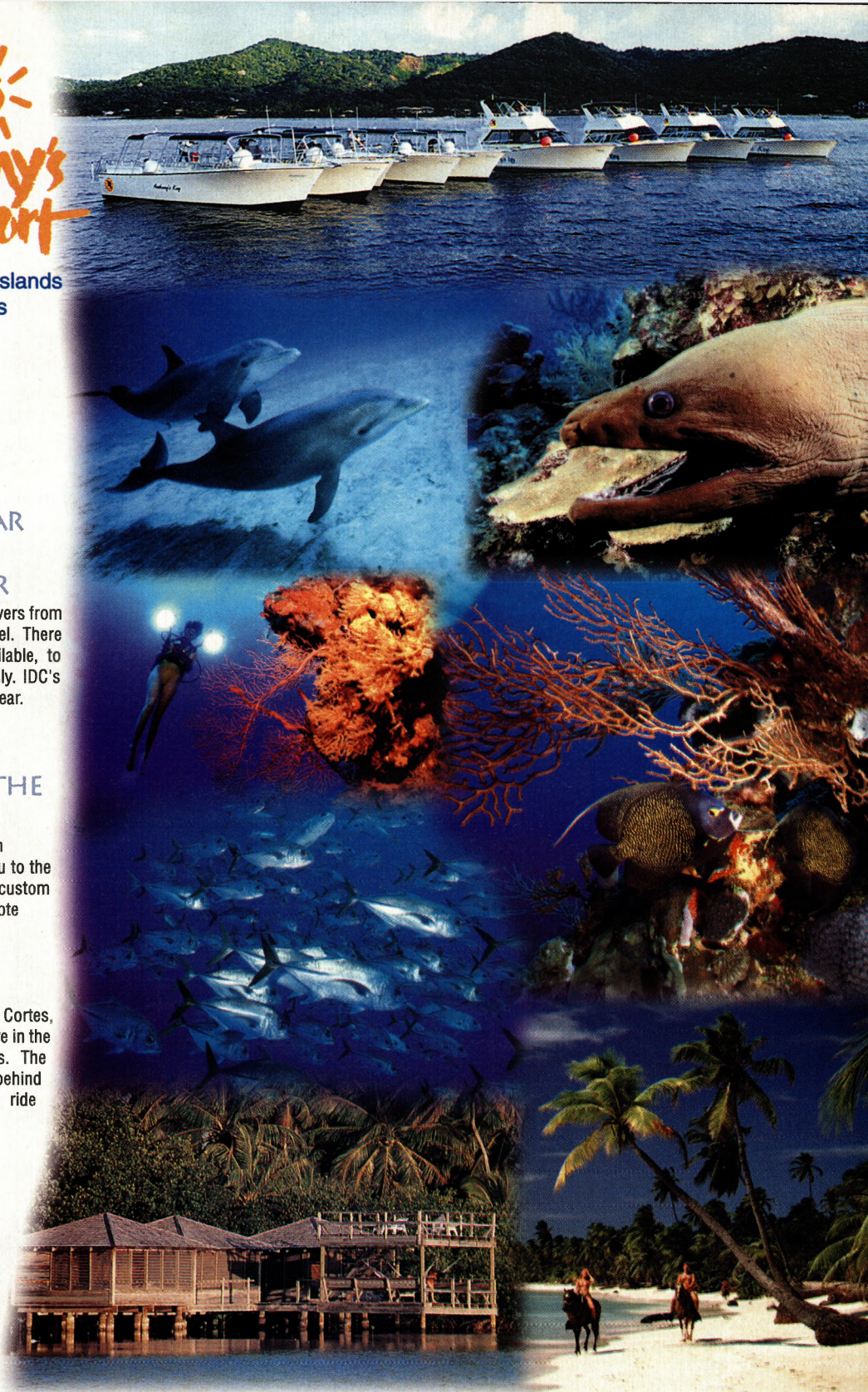
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milestones by ty sawyer


Bob Evans: Fin-ovator

BOB EVANS IS THE MAD GENIUS (AND I MEAN THAT IN THE MOST COMPLIMENTARY WAY) and pioneering innovator behind Force Fins and its many iterations.


Bob first gained fame as an underwater photographer, his work appearing in such diverse media as *National Geographic*, *Life* and Harry Abrams books. In 1997, he was given an honorary masters of science by Brooks Institute of Photography, which he attended from 1971 to 1973.

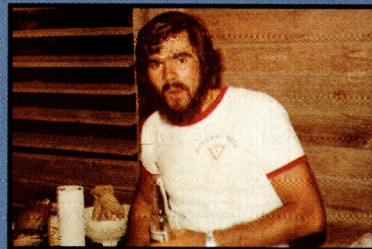


Photo/Steve Barsky

But it is, of course, his revolutionary fin designs that have changed the way we move, and the way we think about moving, through the water. Finding inspiration from the natural mobility of sea creatures, Bob experimented for 15 years before he patented his first Force Fin. Today, he holds more than 30 patents on his Force Fins, which now include vortex generators, variable thrust controllers and (the original) split fin designs. Like his photographs, his fins have also found their way into museums worldwide and have legions of loyal users. 

Peter Hughes: Dancer Man

ALTHOUGH PETER HUGHES LOOKS LIKE THE WILD MAN OF BORNEO IN THESE OLD photos, he has actually brought an innovative business savvy to the sport of diving. His career began in 1968 at Camp Crusoe (later Blue Waters Inn). After the camp closed in 1971, Peter found his way to Anthony's Key Resort on Roatan, where he helped set the stage for AKR to become one of the world's premier resorts. It was also here that he met his wife, Alice. In 1975 they were married and soon moved to Bonaire. In 1977, they bought the Flamingo Beach Club at an auction and built it into Dive Bonaire. By the early 1980s, behind Peter's leadership and innovations, Dive Bonaire had become the largest single dive operation in the world. In quick succession, the midas touch of Peter was felt at Divi resorts on Cayman Brac, Barbados, Dive South Ocean (Bahamas), Dive St. Croix and Divi Wind (Aruba). Parting ways amicably with Divi in 1990, Peter bought the ailing *Sea Dancer*, and he and Alice quickly turned it into their vision of live-aboard luxury. Their original vision has spawned a worldwide fleet of Dancers, which, with the recent launch of the M/V *Sky Dancer*, now totals nine vessels. 



Photo/Courtesy of Peter Hughes Diving

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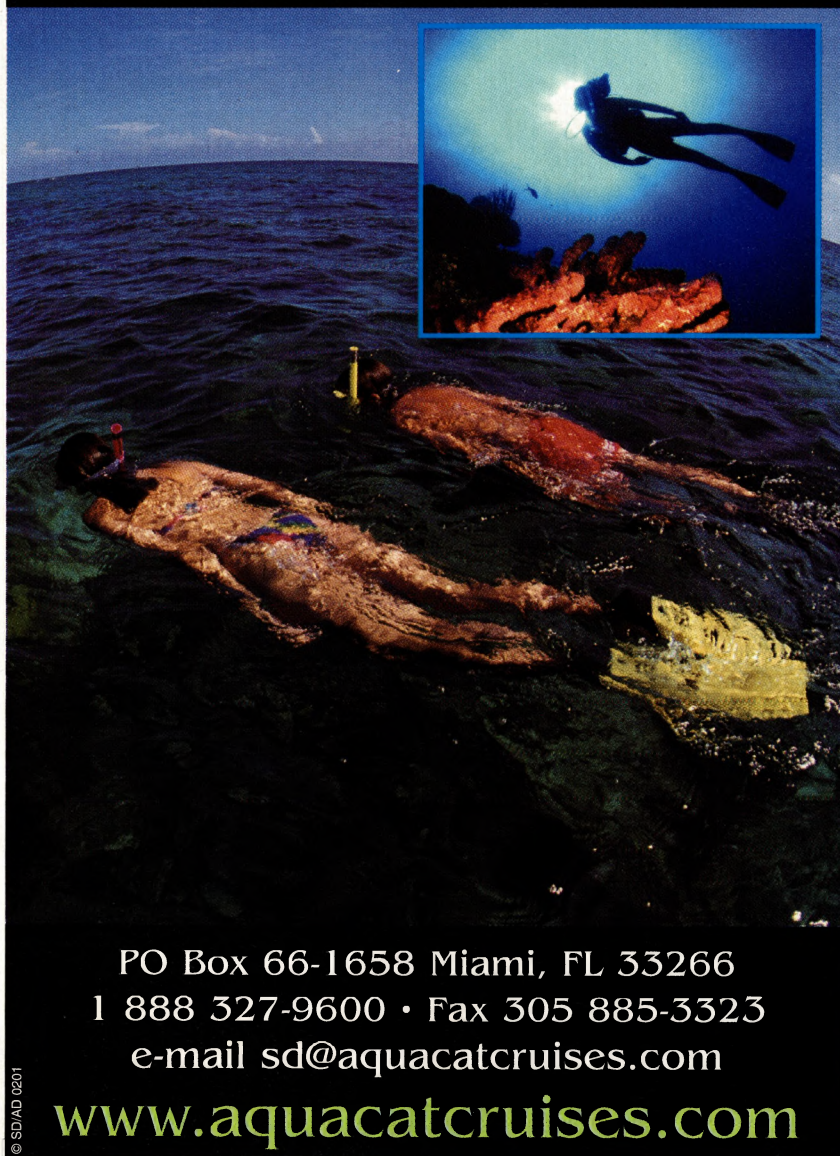
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edited by **Ryan Allen**

New England Cold Water Divers

DURING AUGUST OF 1999, DIVERS FROM Massachusetts and Rhode Island came together to form a new club in the New England area. The New England Cold Water Divers Club (NECWD) is a local affiliate of the National Association of Black Scuba Divers (NABS).

NABS is comprised of more than 50 clubs that combine diving with social and community service activities. One of NECWD community projects involves partnering with a Boston



Photo/Courtesy of Marie Worthy

inner-city, mentoring program called, "Diving Buddies." The program encourages young divers to continue gaining skills and experience and to use safe diving practices. NECWD also participates in local, coastal cleanup activities—a great way to help local communities remove the debris that washes up on the beach with the tides.

The NECWD is open to all interested people, and any certified diver (regardless of experience level) is welcome to join club dives. The club's dive schedule consists of shore dives, boat dives, night dives, tropical fish dives, seal dives and lobster dives. —John Hoagland, NECWD President. For more information, visit www.home.ici.net/~hoagla/necwd.

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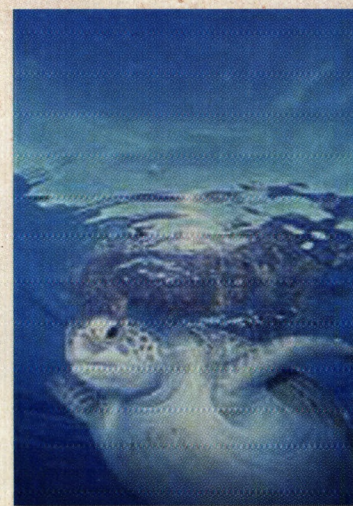
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diver's library

BY MICHELLE DANNER

Welcome to the Diver's Library, where each month we bring you the latest in diving media.

The Cave Divers, Robert F. Burgess, Aqua Quest Publications, Inc., \$19.95. (800) 933-8989

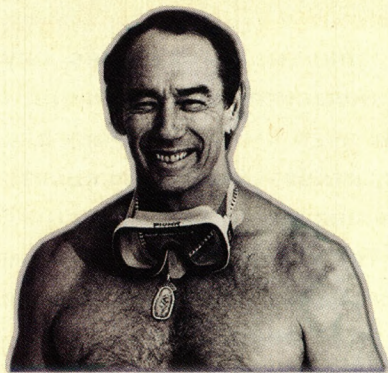
CAVE DIVING IS AN ADVENTURE. THE SPORT is more about the challenge than the discovery. Author Robert F. Burgess says it best in *The Cave Divers*: "The only similarity between Mt. Everest and what lies

underground for explorers on the Huautla Plateau is in the nature of the beasts. One was a visual enigma until it was conquered; the other is a blind one. If it wasn't so impossible...[people] wouldn't be there trying to do it in the first place."

Early cave divers found themselves immersed in darkness, holding their breath, using the walls as a compass. Graham Balcombe and J.A. Sheppard were the first cave divers to use a "breathing apparatus" for a dive in Somersetshire, in southwestern England, in 1934. Their only connection to air was 40 feet of garden hose connected to a respirator made from an old bicycle frame.

True adventurers to this day, cave divers have discovered ancient carvings and historical artifacts over the years. An award-winning book, *The Cave Divers* details the history of cave diving from the discovery of 20,000-year-old clay statues in 1932 by a French speleologist on a one-day adventure to today's year-long treks into 30,000 feet of cavernous beauty and discovery.

For information on how to submit a product for review in Diver's Library, contact Michelle Danner at dannerm@emapusa.com.



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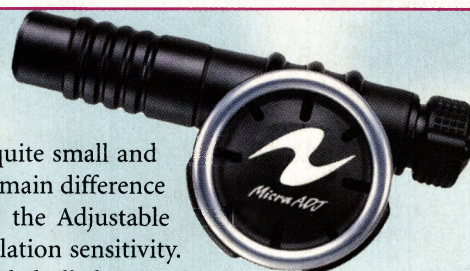
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THE LATEST BUZZ WORD IN REGULATORS IS "STREAMLINING," AND MANUFACTURERS HAVE RESPONDED WITH A WAVE OF DIMINUTIVE DESIGNS. BEAR IN MIND, HOWEVER, THAT "COMPACT" IS A RELATIVE TERM MEANING "SMALLER THAN FULL SIZE," SO THAT EVEN AMONG COMPACT REGS THERE CAN BE SIGNIFICANT VARIATION. UNLIKE BCs OR GAUGES, STREAMLINING A REGULATOR WILL PROBABLY NOT MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN PROTECTING FRAGILE REEFS FROM FORGOTTEN CONSOLES OR REDUCING THE DRAG YOU FEEL WHILE SWIMMING. (THE EXCEPTION MAY BE DIVING IN VERY HIGH CURRENT.) BUT, SINCE THESE REGS ARE LIGHTER IN WEIGHT, THEY WILL PRODUCE LESS JAW FATIGUE, AND THAT'S A DIFFERENCE YOU WILL NOTICE ON EVERY DIVE.

AQUA LUNG WWW.AQUALUNG.COM

COUSTEAU MICRA ADJUSTABLE [\$475]. TITAN MICRA ADJUSTABLE [\$399]. TITAN MICRA [\$350]

The Micra was one of the first compact regs on the market. It's quite small and light (5.5 ounces) and has a knob on the top to regulate airflow. The main difference between the Micra and the Micra Adjustable is the addition (on the Adjustable model) of an external side knob that allows you to control the inhalation sensitivity. Basically, dialed all the way out the Micra breathes easier than dialed all the way in. "Cousteau" and "Titan" refer to the first stage choices, with "Cousteau" offering an extra HP port, which might be a consideration if you run two pressure gauges. **Ph: (760) 597-5000**



DACOR WWW.MARES.COM

VIPER GOLD [\$560]. VIPER METAL [\$480]. VIPER AMERICA [\$440]

All models feature Dacor's Trim Efficiency Control (TEC) to increase incoming airflow while making exhalation easier, too. All three of the Viper models have a side-mounted

exhaust port, making them useable over either shoulder and helping direct bubbles away from your face. The

Metal and Gold models add thermal exchange foils to reduce freezing, as well as a swivel port (on top of the first stage) that rotates 170 degrees to reduce hose "pull" in

your mouth. The Viper America first stage has two HP and four LP ports. The Metal and Gold models have two HP, one

swivel LP and four standard LP ports. **Ph: (203) 855-0631**



ATOMIC WWW.ATOMICDIVERS.COM

T1 [\$1,442]. B1 [\$630]

Atomic lays claim to having the first all-titanium regulator—the T1. The difference between it and its cousin, the B1, is in the first stage (the second stages are identical except for the purge cover). In the T1, the first stage is all titanium. In the B1, it's brass. Both come with the LP ports on a swivel, helping to relieve hose strain. Two innovations in these

Atomic regs are 1) a depth-activated venturi control that's designed to improve overall performance, and 2) a design that prevents the orifice from seating up unless there's pressure in the line, which should extend seat wear and improve regulator performance over time. **Ph: (714) 375-1433**



GENESIS WWW.GENESSICUBA.COM

OZ TITANIUM [\$995]. GS2000 [\$425]

Genesis is also introducing a titanium reg, the OZ, in addition to their brass GS2000. The first stages of both are environmentally-sealed.

This prevents water from entering the first stage during a dive, which should provide better performance over time with less maintenance.

The second stages appear identical, with titanium in the OZ to eliminate effects of corrosion and rust, as well as reduce weight. Both second stages have a knob that allows the diver to control the breathing resistance and adjust it at any time during the dive.

Ph: (949) 581-8069



OCEANIC WWW.OCEANICWORLDWIDE.COM

ZETA [\$569 TO \$619]*.

OMEGA 2 [\$495 TO \$500]*.

DELTA 3 [\$400 TO \$436]*

***PRICE RANGE DEPENDS ON FIRST STAGE**

Oceanic's Zeta incorporates airflow ports around the entire main valve, which, in simple terms, makes for easier breathing. The

Omega 2 features a side exhaust that directs bubbles away from your field of vision. The Delta 3 has a Diver

Inhalation System that allows, through an external knob, control of the inhalation resistance. The Delta

then has a factory-set adjustment, which continues to readjust breathing resistance based on your original choice, on descent and ascent. There are three first stage choices (PX2, DX4, CDX) with a swivel on the PX2. Ph: (510) 562-0500



SEAIRA WWW.SEAIRA.COM

TITANIUM [\$1,300].

SEAIRA TRI-METAL [\$400]

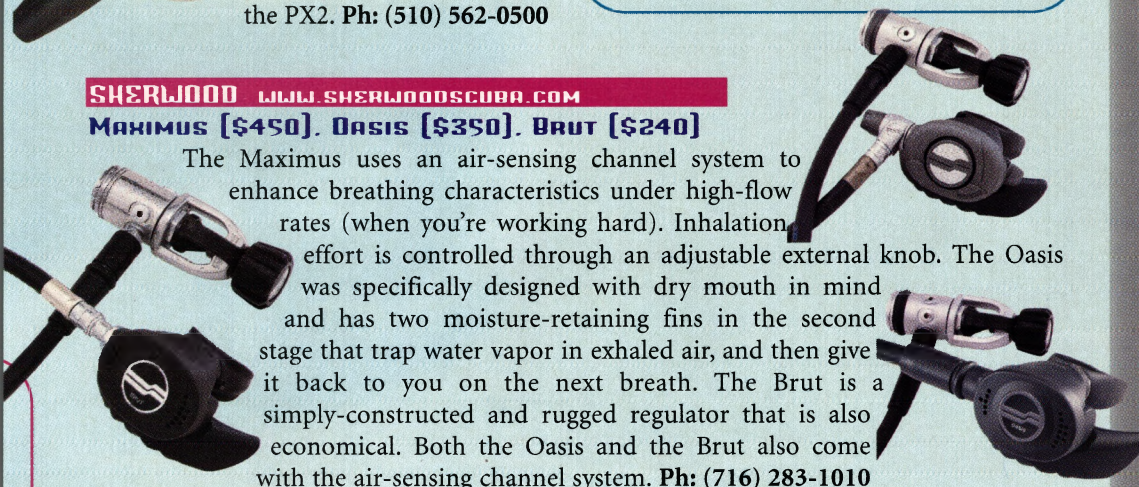
The SEAIRAs feature brass heat exchangers in the second stage, which conduct heat from the surrounding water to warm the breathing air. Both have a slightly over-sized adjustable inhalation control knob, designed for easier gripping, especially with gloves. A mid-size exhaust tee better disperses exhaust bubbles away from your face. The first stages (titanium in the Titanium and brass in the Tri-Metal) are balanced pistons with a larger piston pathway that should improve performance at depth. A Teflon-filled, self-lubricating Super Vitron Ring is used to reduce friction around the piston shaft head, which will also enhance performance. Ph: (800) 257-2822



SHERWOOD WWW.SHERWOODSCUBA.COM

MAXIMUS [\$450]. OASIS [\$350]. BRUT [\$240]

The Maximus uses an air-sensing channel system to enhance breathing characteristics under high-flow rates (when you're working hard). Inhalation effort is controlled through an adjustable external knob. The Oasis was specifically designed with dry mouth in mind and has two moisture-retaining fins in the second stage that trap water vapor in exhaled air, and then give it back to you on the next breath. The Brut is a simply-constructed and rugged regulator that is also economical. Both the Oasis and the Brut also come with the air-sensing channel system. Ph: (716) 283-1010



SCUBAPRO WWW.SCUBAPRO.COM

S600 [\$670 TO \$946]*.

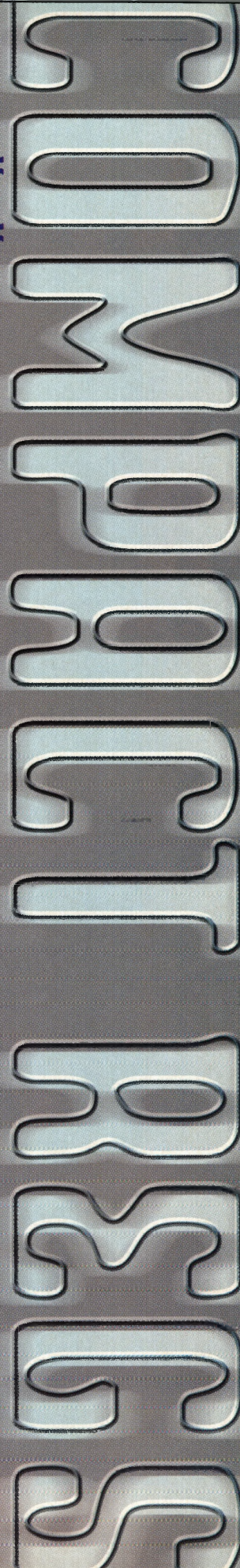
S550 [\$440 TO \$796]*

***PRICE RANGE DEPENDS ON FIRST STAGE**

The S600 is Scubapro's top-of-the-line reg made from a special polymer for very light weight. The S600 incorporates Scubapro's Peak Performance Air Balancing System (PPB) to fine tune the regulator as you breathe. Divers can adjust both the inhalation resistance and airflow. The S550 incorporates many features of the S600, but lacks the inhalation control. Both regs work with a variety of first stages, from the MK 20 UL to the MK 18 ULD. (The S550 can also pair with the MK18.) Ph: (800) SCUBAPRO



By Ken Kurtis



TUSA WWW.TUSA.NET

RS-230 [\$399]. RS-130 [\$329]. RS-110 [\$289]

TUSA offers combinations of two first stages (R-200 & R-100) and two second stages (S-30 & S-10) to produce the three regs. (The first digit of the model number indicates the first stage, and the second two digits indicate the second stage.) The S-30 is compact and lightweight and includes a 9-position, click-stop, inhalation adjustment knob, as well as a larger exhaust valve to reduce exhalation effort. The S-10 is essentially the same, but without the inhalation adjustment. The R-200 uses a balanced diaphragm to maintain breathing performance as tank pressure drops, while the R-100 uses a balanced piston with the same goal in mind. Ph: (562) 498-3708



ZEAGLE WWW.ZEAGLE.COM

ZX [\$529 w/50D FIRST STAGE. \$469 w/DS-IV FIRST STAGE]

Zeagle's compact reg is the ZX, available with either the 50D first stage or the DS-IV. (The difference is that the 50D has swivel LP ports and the DS-IV does not.) On the ZX second stage, there are controls for adjusting inhalation resistance (a knob) and continued airflow (a lever). A heat exchanger discourages freezing. Both first stage choices come environmentally sealed to keep contaminants out of the internal mechanisms. Ph: (813) 782-5568
All prices are manufacturers' suggested retail.



MOUTHPIECES

When you find a reg that breathes well for you, don't rule it out if you don't like the mouthpiece. Mouthpieces are fairly universal and easy to change. There's no rule against sticking an Aqua Lung mouthpiece on an Atomic reg. And there are some mouthpieces (from Rite Bite, Oceanic and Scubapro, among others) that are designed to better orthodontically fit your mouth. Talk to your dealer about making a change.

TESTING A REG

One of the most desirable features in a reg is ease of breathing. So when you're testing in the store, instead of taking a huge breath and gulping the air, take a slow, easy breath. Think of the regulator as a glass of fine wine that is to be sipped in order to be appreciated more fully. And when testing a reg, don't worry if it makes a "brrrrr" sound when you exhale. They all tend to do that when the second stage diaphragm is dry.



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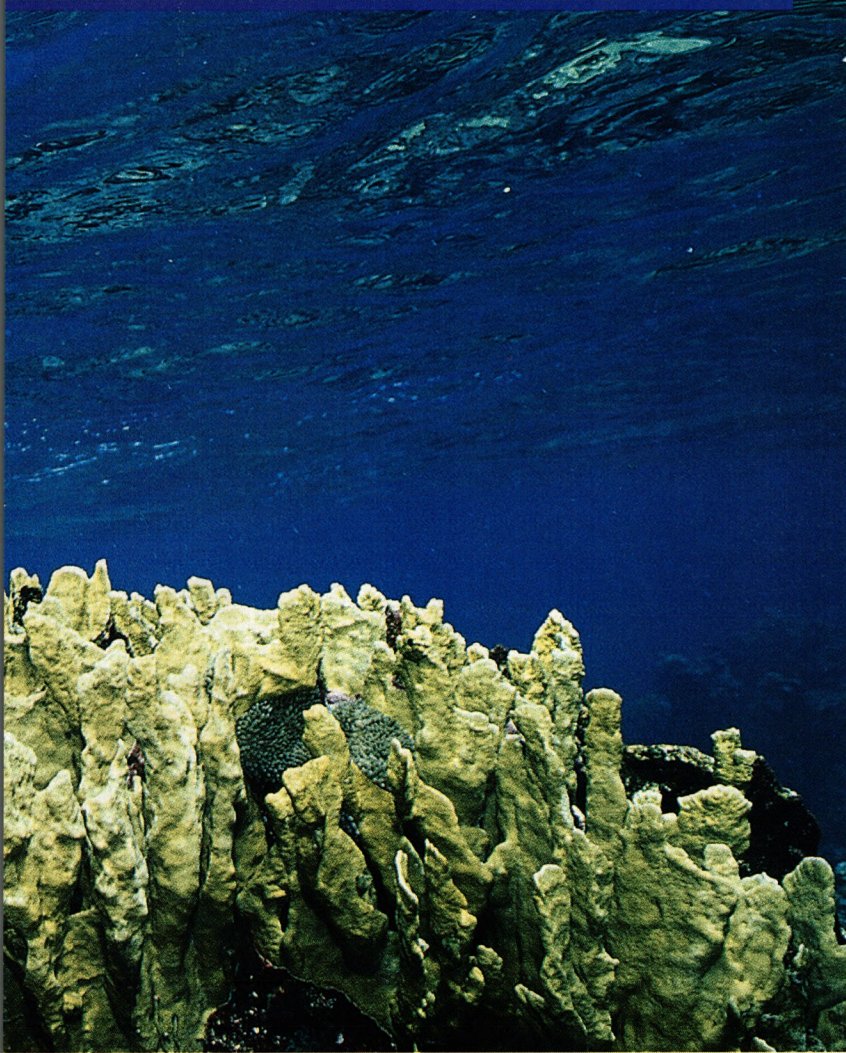
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SEDUCED



The three faces of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Right inset: The hustle and bustle of St. Thomas as seen from Drake's Seat. Spread photo: A pristine coral garden off St. Croix. Above inset: The natural splendor of St. John.

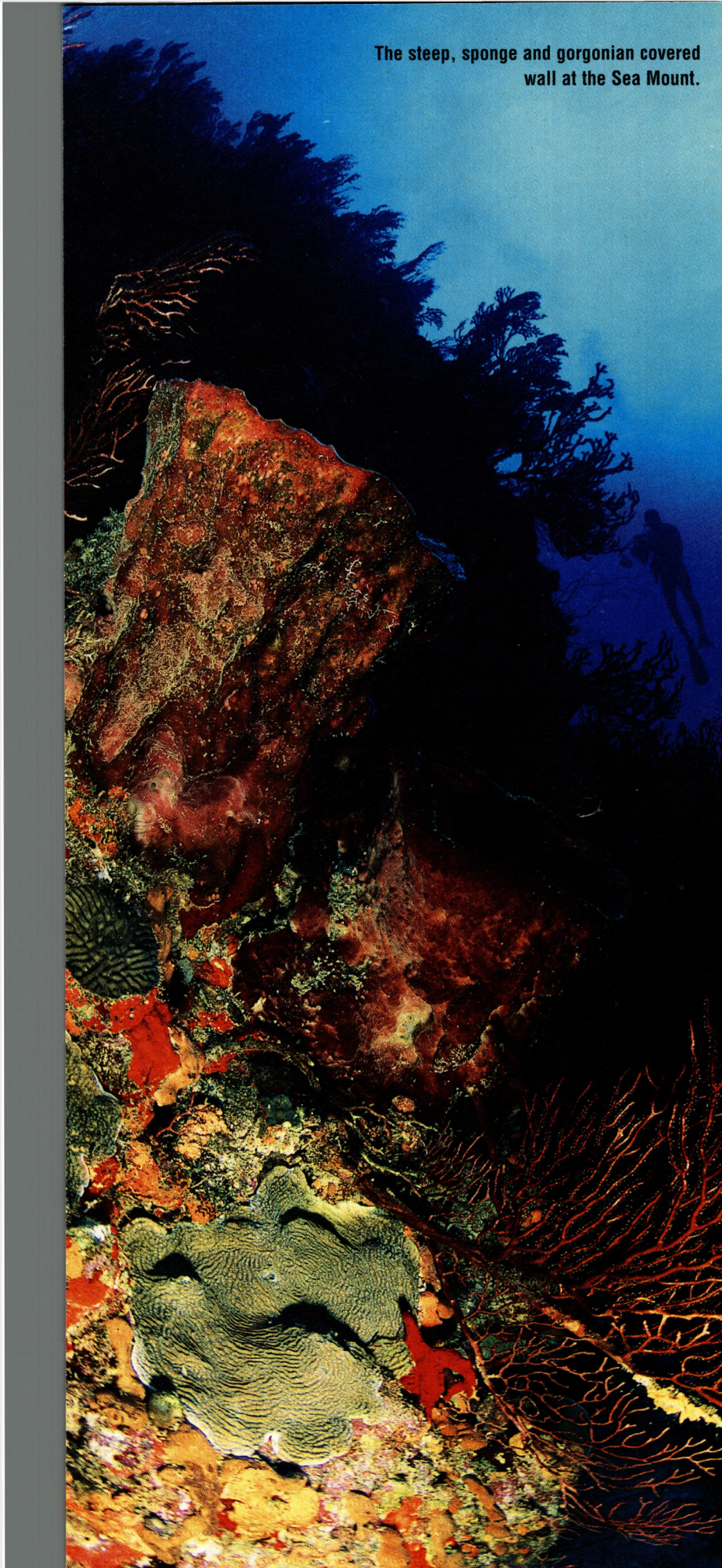
BY THE



Three days, three islands, three opportunities to achieve total diving serenity. Sounds like a tough assignment, but I was up for the challenge. The United States Virgin Islands were calling me once again—tantalizing me with promises of coral-infested waters, sponge-covered ledges and dropoffs, secluded beaches and some of the best wreck diving in the Caribbean.

VIRGINS

BY STEVE SIMONSEN



The steep, sponge and gorgonian covered wall at the Sea Mount.

ST. CROIX, PLUNGING WALL LINES

Day One: St. Croix means only one thing to me—wall diving—and that's what I intended to do. The north shore of St. Croix is loaded with ledges and dropoffs, covered in coral and sponges, and teeming with marine life. Two of the most unique lie in close proximity to the Salt River Marina and are only a short five-minute boat ride away from each other. These two sites provided me with two very incredible and unparalleled dive experiences.

The first was Salt River East, which I dived early morning off St. Croix. In the light of an orange sunrise, I slipped into the crystal water, reaching the wall at 40 feet. Giant sea anemones, purple seafans and outcroppings of huge black coral jutted out from the wall, creating a canyon-like effect. I swam back and forth along the the wall's edge, dizzying myself in a forest of Purple and Yellow Tube Sponges inhabited by large schools of Blackbar Soldierfish. I felt an undying urge to explore further—past my limits—but decided against it.

Sure that my first dive of the day could happily have been my last, I proceeded just 300 feet west to the second site, Salt River West. The wall there begins at 20 feet and drops steeply to 90 feet and beyond. Seawhips, broad shelves of leaf, plate and sheet corals form many canyons. I cruised above and below each ledge, in search of the resident large Green Moray Eels. They played hide-and-seek, peeking out from inside their dens to tease me. Ending the dive, I was satisfied in fulfilling my search, seeing more than a dozen of the slippery, green creatures along the way.

Further exploration west of the Salt River dive sites, just before Cane Bay, brought me to the Sea Mount. This site was a whirlwind of marine life. Each time I entered the water, I was greeted by a school of curious Horse-eye Jacks. The school would break formation and swim directly toward me, circling quickly as if sizing me up, and then disappear. I navigated a mountain of rock that had a deep undercut ledge on the lee side. There



was a busy school of eight butterflyfish nibbling away at polyps from deepwater gorgonians. Five Queen Angelfish, the most stunning of the Caribbean angels, flashed their bright colors, making yet another affirmation that attempting to describe all visible forms of marine life at this site would read like a Who's Who of the Paul Humann fish I.D. books. The Sea Mount had quickly become one of my favorite sites in St. Croix.

A bit water-logged, I took a trip to the Dutch-influ-

ready for the day's duty-free shopping. Cafés nestled in narrow brick alleys offer shade and refreshments to those touring the Danish-inspired architecture and experiencing the historical downtown of Charlotte Amalie. In the end, however, it's the wreck diving that I came to do, and I wasted little time jumping on the first available dive boat.

Good thing I caught one because off St. Thomas there are more shipwrecks than there are dive operators. Of the

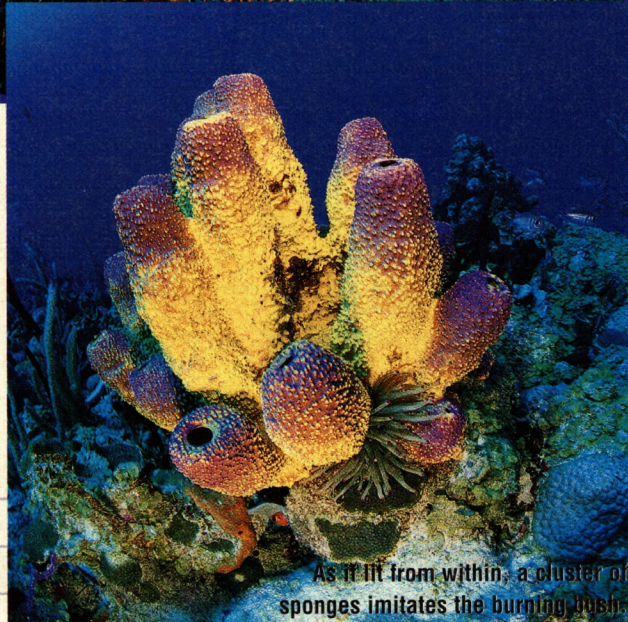


Pulled by Torpedo DPVs, divers make quick work of exploring the *W.I.T. Shoal* off St. Thomas.

enced and picturesque town of Fredericksted, where divers can be seen during the evening hours gearing up for night dives along the Fredericksted Pier. There, divers can come face to face with Striped Sea Stars, several species of decorator crabs, file clams and three different types of octopi.

ST. THOMAS, HUSTLE, BUSTLE AND SHIPWRECKS

Day Two: Just as St. Croix meant wall diving, so does St. Thomas mean wreck diving—and some of the finest in the Caribbean. North of serene St. Croix, St. Thomas' harbor is constantly packed full of sailing vessels and cruise ships. The shops lining the interiors of the restored Danish warehouses along the harbor stand



As if lit from within, a cluster of sponges imitates the burning bush.

wrecks, the *W. I. T. Shoal* is one I couldn't pass up. A large cargo ship sitting upright in 90 feet of water, she spans nearly 400 feet from bow to stern and towers 60 feet up toward the surface. This dive was awesome—a gigantic hull and huge propellers rested in the sand—a decorated submerged piece of machinery laden with soft sponges, delicate corals and shimmering fish.

Not too far from the *W.I.T. Shoal* lies another enormous wreck—the *Grain Wreck*. Unfortunately, it was one I had to pass on due to time constraints. The wreck is said to be seldom visited by divers, but rumored to be used as a training site for Navy SEAL free diving. It rests in 115 feet of water and sightings of larger pelagics are commonplace, making one thing for sure—I'll be back.

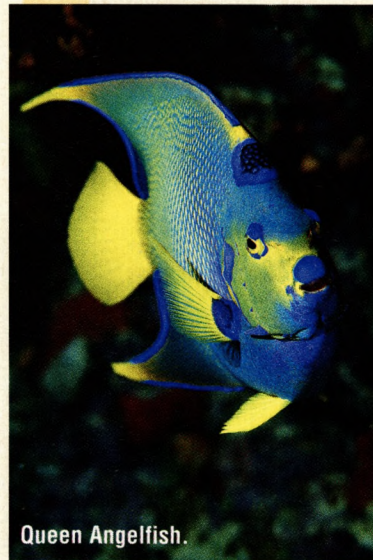
Moving on through Gregory Channel is one of my all-time favorite wrecks, the *J.B.K.* The wreck glistens with a mixed school of Striped Grunts and Cottonwicks. During this dive, I saw two Hawksbill Turtles ascending to the surface to take a breath. And later, a passing school of Horse-eye Jacks seemed to escort me to the surface with a swift fly-by.

Although St. Thomas is known for its wreck diving, there is one dive site that doesn't involve a wreck that should be mentioned. The site is called Sail Rock and is off the southwestern shoreline of the island. It has three pinnacles, each of which is buzzing with marine life and wildly covered in marine organisms, such as Green Finger Sponges and flowery, translucent hydroids. Many coral crevices conceal armor-plated slipper lobsters. Sail Rock is an incredible dive

and an easy one for the novice diver.

ST. JOHN, AU NATURAL

Day Three: From the plunging walls of St. Thomas to the awesome wreck diving of St. Croix, I felt like I needed some down-time—and St. John was the perfect place to get it. After arriving at the southern-most island of the USVI, I found myself on a bumpy dirt road cresting the top of Bordeaux Mountain, St. John's tallest peak. The smell from the lightly scented bay rum and cinnamon trees wafted in the air.



Queen Angelfish.

And in every direction, only trees and ocean surrounded me. The beaches were secluded and serene, while the waters were tugging at me and, of course, I couldn't resist.

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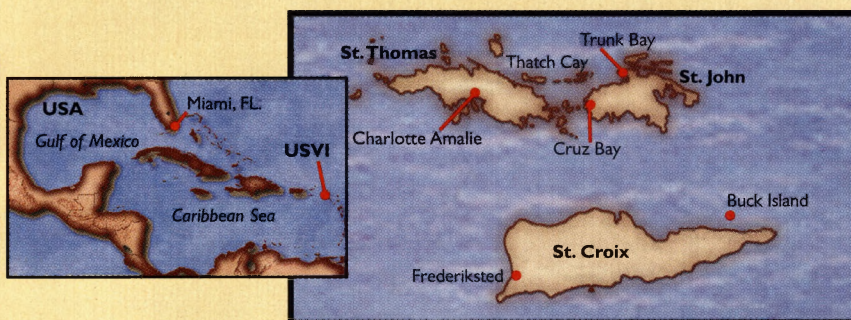
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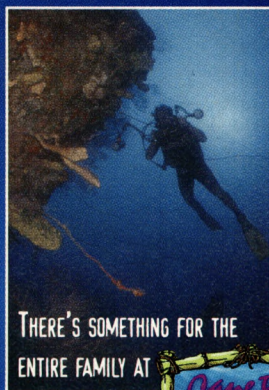
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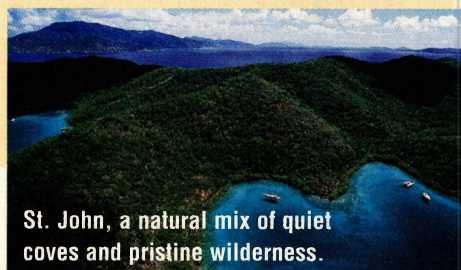
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booby birds and a beacon for divers. I slid into the warm water and encountered reef sharks and Nurse Sharks amidst colorful ledges busy with tropical fish. The dive soothed my mind and my senses.

Another must-see site marked by a rock formation is the Carval Rock site, off the north shore of St. John. It's a double-humped rock resembling a wooden, square sailing ship. A story tells of the rock being fired upon during a rain squall, mistaken for an enemy sailing vessel. The sailors who thought they would uncover the booty after the storm had passed, discovered instead a battle-scarred outcropping covered with bird droppings.

With the story in my mind, I ventured below the waves and found a great natural treasure. A constant



St. John, a natural mix of quiet coves and pristine wilderness.

parade of marine life welcomed me, and at the southeastern base of the rock, on the shallow reef, there were enormous schools of silversides, her-ring and anchovies.

Just around the corner from Carval Rock is one of the best dives on St. John—Lind Point. Designated as a National Bio-Reserve, this may easily be the fishiest dive in the territory—and one I make each time I visit St. John.

Although I couldn't explore it, a newly discovered site south of Stevens Cay called Witch's Hat is abuzz with blue runners, flirtatious Queen Angelfish and gorgeous Orange Cup Coral. That's one I'll also be back for.

NOT ENOUGH

A little more than four days after I left for the USVI, I was back on a plane headed home. This assignment gave me only 72 hours to get in some serious wall and wreck diving, but take my advice—take more time. Three incredible islands and three opportunities to achieve complete diving serenity warrant far more attention. 🐠

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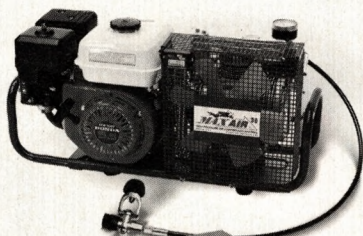
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Jean-Michel Cousteau • Keiko

search and multi-media productions, OFS is enlightening people about the importance of not only saving our oceans, but claiming responsibility for them.

"Our mission can be said in one sentence," Cousteau said. "Protect the ocean, and you protect yourself."

In reaching out to organizations, government groups and to divers and non-divers alike, OFS will help to understand our global water system better, enabling us to take personal responsibility for the restoration and preservation of our marine habitats. The time has come to step up to the plate.

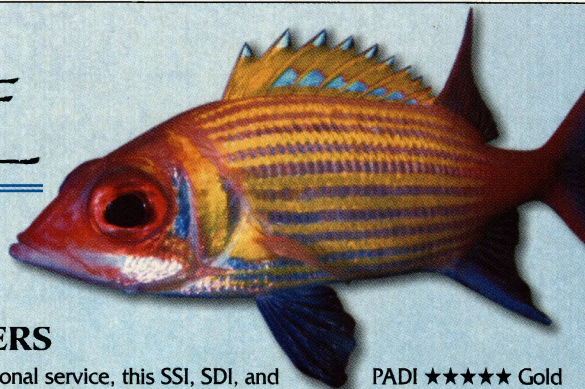
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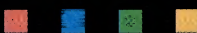


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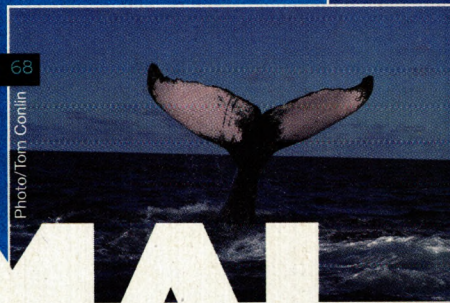


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—JOHN MILTON, *PARADISE LOST*

BIG ANIMAL encounters



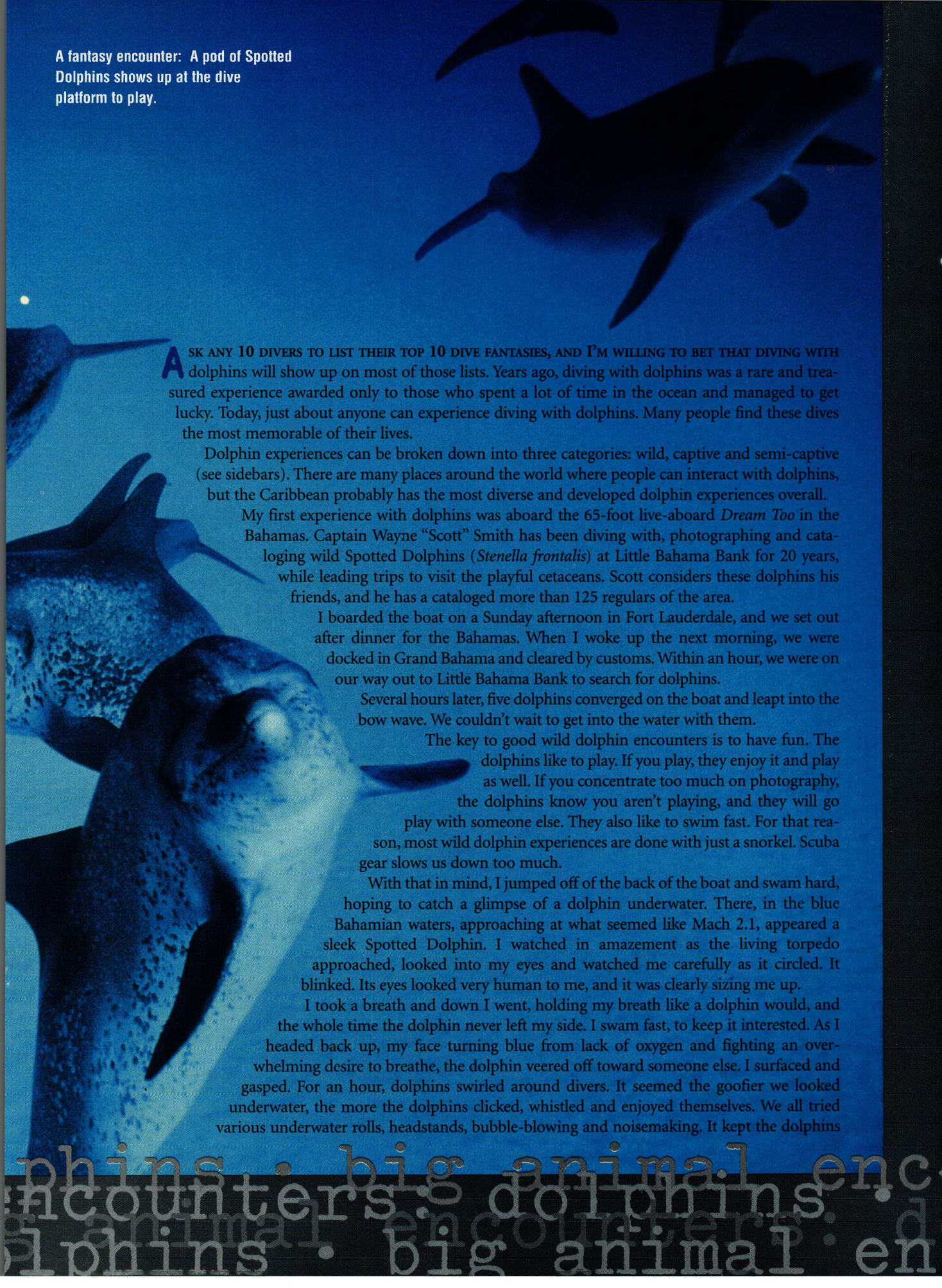


THE WAY OF THE DOLPHIN

WANNA PLAY?

BY JONATHAN BIRD

animal encounters: dolphins
animal encounters: dolphins
animal encounters: dolphins



A fantasy encounter: A pod of Spotted Dolphins shows up at the dive platform to play.

ASK ANY 10 DIVERS TO LIST THEIR TOP 10 DIVE FANTASIES, AND I'M WILLING TO BET THAT DIVING WITH dolphins will show up on most of those lists. Years ago, diving with dolphins was a rare and treasured experience awarded only to those who spent a lot of time in the ocean and managed to get lucky. Today, just about anyone can experience diving with dolphins. Many people find these dives the most memorable of their lives.

Dolphin experiences can be broken down into three categories: wild, captive and semi-captive (see sidebars). There are many places around the world where people can interact with dolphins, but the Caribbean probably has the most diverse and developed dolphin experiences overall.

My first experience with dolphins was aboard the 65-foot live-aboard *Dream Too* in the Bahamas. Captain Wayne "Scott" Smith has been diving with, photographing and cataloging wild Spotted Dolphins (*Stenella frontalis*) at Little Bahama Bank for 20 years, while leading trips to visit the playful cetaceans. Scott considers these dolphins his friends, and he has a cataloged more than 125 regulars of the area.

I boarded the boat on a Sunday afternoon in Fort Lauderdale, and we set out after dinner for the Bahamas. When I woke up the next morning, we were docked in Grand Bahama and cleared by customs. Within an hour, we were on our way out to Little Bahama Bank to search for dolphins.

Several hours later, five dolphins converged on the boat and leapt into the bow wave. We couldn't wait to get into the water with them.

The key to good wild dolphin encounters is to have fun. The dolphins like to play. If you play, they enjoy it and play as well. If you concentrate too much on photography, the dolphins know you aren't playing, and they will go play with someone else. They also like to swim fast. For that reason, most wild dolphin experiences are done with just a snorkel. Scuba gear slows us down too much.

With that in mind, I jumped off of the back of the boat and swam hard, hoping to catch a glimpse of a dolphin underwater. There, in the blue Bahamian waters, approaching at what seemed like Mach 2.1, appeared a sleek Spotted Dolphin. I watched in amazement as the living torpedo approached, looked into my eyes and watched me carefully as it circled. It blinked. Its eyes looked very human to me, and it was clearly sizing me up.

I took a breath and down I went, holding my breath like a dolphin would, and the whole time the dolphin never left my side. I swam fast, to keep it interested. As I headed back up, my face turning blue from lack of oxygen and fighting an overwhelming desire to breathe, the dolphin veered off toward someone else. I surfaced and gasped. For an hour, dolphins swirled around divers. It seemed the goofier we looked underwater, the more the dolphins clicked, whistled and enjoyed themselves. We all tried various underwater rolls, headstands, bubble-blowing and noisemaking. It kept the dolphins

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animal encounters: dolphins

Dolphins seem to love Diver Propulsion Vehicles (DPVs). For Dolphins, the faster the game, the better.



interested, but try taking decent pictures while you are flailing upside down and singing "Under the Sea" into your snorkel—it's tough.

Every once in a while the dolphins would get a little bored and start wandering off while we all caught our breath. That's when one of the crew members would grab his DPV (Diver Propulsion Vehicle) and start doing cir-

cles. One thing for sure, dolphins can't resist the DPV! It brought them streaking back many times. For a whole week, we did this aerobic workout every day.

If this encounter seems like a lot of work, there is an easier way to do it. On a trip to Roatan, I stopped in for a few days at Anthony's

Key Resort, home of the Institute for Marine Sciences. This is a semi-captive environment, where trained Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) followed the dive boat out to a nearby reef. On the sandy ocean floor, the divers gathered around in a loose

group, and the dolphins swam up to interact. Everyone got to see a dolphin underwater, but the dolphins decided how much they wanted to interact. They acted

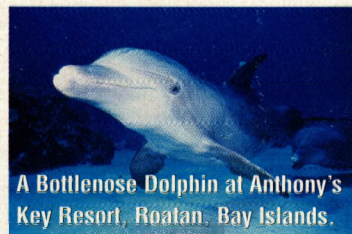
Wild Dolphin Encounters

Wild dolphin encounters are usually the most exciting and pulse-quickenning, since any interaction with the animals is at their discretion. Somehow, having a wild animal choose to interact with me is a wonderful notion. Maybe the dolphin thinks I'm interesting (or perhaps just funny looking). But wild dolphins do not always cooperate. There is no such thing as a "sure thing" when it comes to diving with wild dolphins, although many operators in the Bahamas and Bimini come close.

Semi-Captive Dolphin Encounters

Semi-captive dolphin interactions combine the best of both worlds—a sure encounter and an open ocean dive. The dolphins literally follow the boat out to the dive site, interact with the divers, then follow the boat back. The fact that they don't swim away is an indication that these animals enjoy their special treatment of being fed regularly, yet getting to go out every day to play.

UNEXSO on Grand Bahama is known for the quality of its program, the friendliness of its Bottlenose Dolphins, and the opportunity for divers and nondivers of all ages to interact, and even caress or hitch a ride, with these special creatures. Participants can experience the dive on snorkel or scuba.



A Bottlenose Dolphin at Anthony's Key Resort, Roatan, Bay Islands.

very much like dogs let off their leash—excited, hyper and looking to play. Often, one of the dolphins would find someone they liked and stayed around that person for quite a while. If you were the lucky one, you could expect an incredible experience! But generally everyone got plenty of opportunities to see and photograph the animals.

Anthony's Key Resort is not the only place to find semi-captive dolphin experiences. Other places, most notably UNEXSO in Grand Bahama, offer similar programs.

Another excellent captive dolphin experience I've seen is the Dolphin Discovery in Chankanaab National

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Marine Park on Cozumel. This relatively new facility has half a dozen Bottlenose Dolphins that live in an enormous ocean pen. The depth is about 35 feet deep, and the dolphins have lots of room to swim around at full speed and interact with each other. Because the dolphins are in a captive environment, Dolphin Discovery can offer programs for diving with the dolphins, but also simpler things for young children, like patting a dolphin, swimming with the dolphins and yes, even learning how to ride them. OK, I'll admit it. I went through the program where you learn to ride on the dorsal fins of two dolphins, and it's a heck of a lot of fun. My wife loved it, too. We even bought the souvenir pictures they sell in the gift shop afterward. On our dive with the dolphins in the crystal clear water, the animals seemed delighted to play with us. (I think they like to show off how much better they can swim.)

In spite of the dolphin smile, dolphins have well-developed social structures and individual personalities and

UNEXSO's (off Grand Bahama) program, utilizing semi-captive dolphins, is a sure thing for up-close and personal encounters.



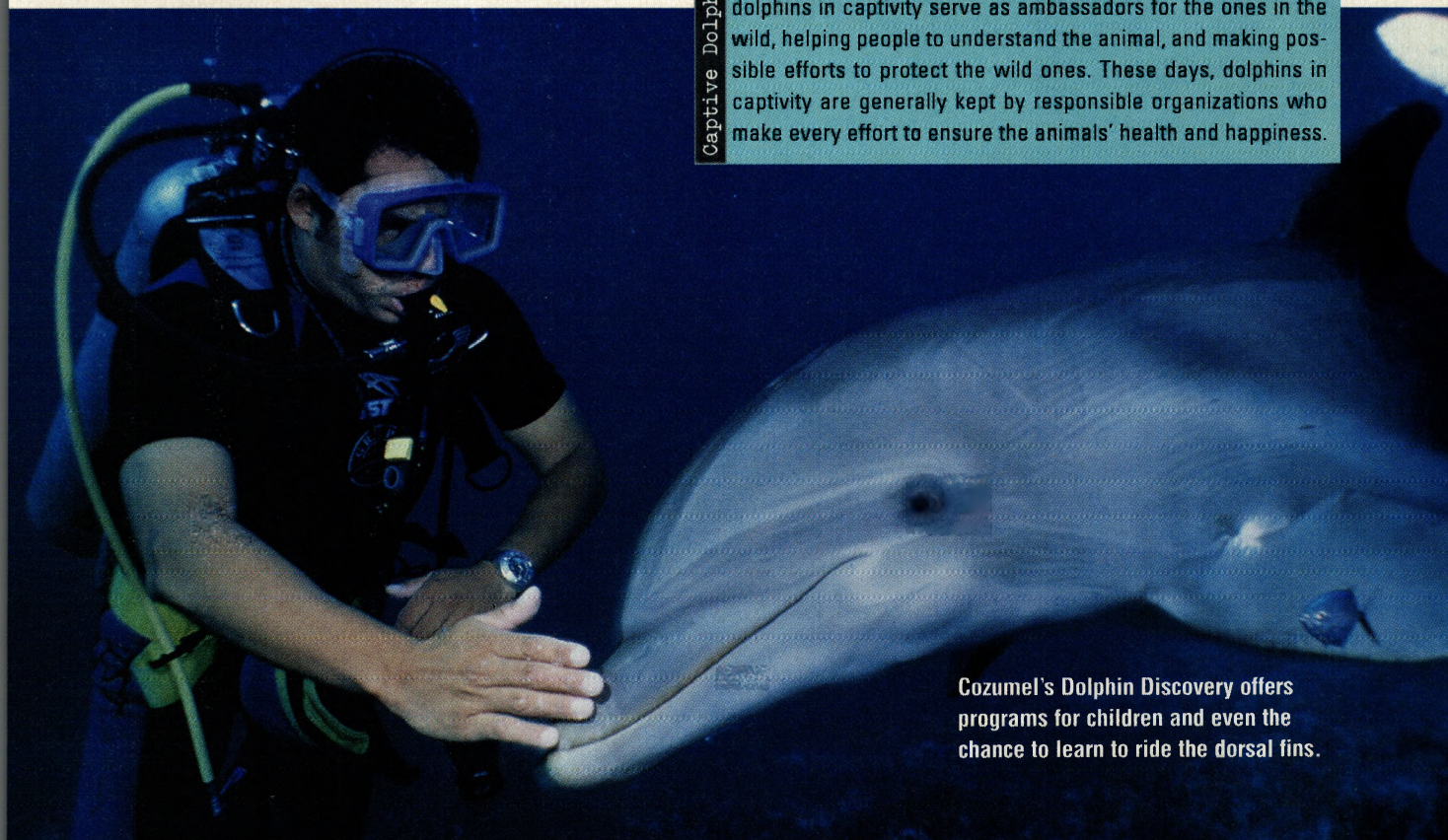
Photo/Al Hornsby

moods. Do not try to touch dolphins unless a trainer says it's OK and you are specifically instructed how. Respect is the first rule of any encounter with animals.

No matter which kind of dolphin encounter you choose, there is little doubt that diving with dolphins will be among the most memorable dives you will ever do. Once the privilege of a select few, encounters with dolphins are now more accessible than ever. While it may be a lot easier and more common to dive with dolphins, it does not diminish the magic of the experience. If diving with dolphins is on your top 10 list, there is no reason to wait. The dolphins are there, just waiting for someone to join them! 🐬

Captive Dolphin Encounters

Captive dolphin interaction experiences are a sure bet. These programs usually involve trained dolphins in a pool, pen or ocean enclosure. The dolphins are fed treats to interact with the divers. Many people have valid issues with keeping dolphins in captivity. Proponents suggest that the relatively few dolphins in captivity serve as ambassadors for the ones in the wild, helping people to understand the animal, and making possible efforts to protect the wild ones. These days, dolphins in captivity are generally kept by responsible organizations who make every effort to ensure the animals' health and happiness.



Cozumel's Dolphin Discovery offers programs for children and even the chance to learn to ride the dorsal fins.

FORGET THE GREAT WHITE, ORCAS ARE THE TRUE MASTERS OF

About 20 pods of Orcas show up off the Lofoten Islands of Norway each year to feast on herring and, occasionally, check out the incredible views.

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THE REALM

STORY BY OAKLEY COCHRAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMOS NACHOUM

"Are you afraid of failure, or of success?" underwater photographer Amos Nachoum had asked me. Face-to-face with an Orca underwater, I concluded that I was scared of success—very scared.

I was in the Lofoten Islands of northern Norway on a two-week diving trip led by Amos to search for Orcas, and I was—or so I thought—desperate for an underwater encounter with these toothed whales.

But when the Orca came zooming through the night-black waters to inspect me, all I could think about was its mouth and its teeth. Orcas aren't called killer whales for nothing, or so my addled brain told me.

A more rational mind might have remembered that although Orcas are called "killers," they are eaters of sea-dwellers, not of humans. Often working in organized packs, these wolves of the sea pluck basking seals off beaches, stalk migrating whales twice their size, play catch with Manta Rays and, in at least one recorded instance, attack Great White Sharks.

"They don't try to taste things that they don't know," Amos had said, and they have so little familiarity with humans that they consider us a novelty, not dinner.

There is no record of an Orca in the wild wounding a person and only one case of a captive Orca causing a fatality. Besides, there are better things to eat than humans. According to Orca-researcher Anna Bisther, whom I met in the Lofoten, herring are such a delicacy for



orcas • big animal encounters • orcas • big animal encounters • orcas • big animal encounters

down several at a time, the Orca will feed on them one-by-one, delicately, like picking flowers.

Of the 40 or so Orca pods that frequent the Lofoten, only about nine hunt this way. Amos calls the technique "carouseling" and believes that the pods have learned to do it. "In '94, one of the first years of Orca diving, only one or two pods were carouseling when we were swimming. Now many more do." The other pods seem to herd the herring against the shore and then slap their tails into them, but this procedure is less productive.

When herring numbers dropped in the early '70s, the Orcas were blamed. And then they were hunted. In the early '80s, fishermen and others killed 400 Orcas in the Lofoten. Scientists and the Norwegian government stepped in to restrict hunting and enforce fishing quotas, and, by the end of the decade, both Orcas and herring were returning to the area. Now both species seem to have reached their pre-'70s populations. But the Orcas are still getting back up to speed on how best to capture their favorite food.

I saw some of the carouseling behavior. I saw an Orca swimming the circumference of a ball of shimmering fish, sidling into it like a cat rubbing up against a post.

As we rocketed over the waves, Orcas sometimes swam along with us. They generally kept their distance. But as the largest members of the dolphin family, the Orcas couldn't always contain their curiosity. Several times they

expression of dominance). Orcas have an elaborate system of movements and pod-specific vocalizations—whistles, chirps, trills and other sounds produced by air movements in the region of their blowhole—that establish the pod's social structure.

Mothers never stray from their calves. The mother-calf bond is so strong that if the calf dies, she will mourn it by cradling it in her front fins, or try to resuscitate it by pushing it to the surface to make it breathe.

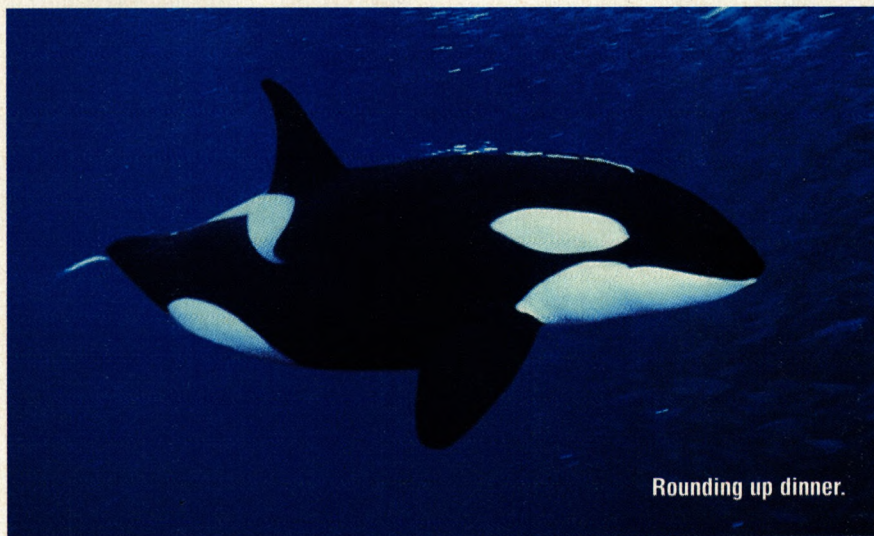
Among adults, even sleeping is a social experience. Two Orcas will trade off sleeping, Anna said, with the wakeful Orca pulling the dormant Orca by its dorsal fin. They will then switch positions.

On one of our last successful diving days, I had the face-to-face encounter. My first reaction—fear of being eaten—was replaced by overwhelming awe as the Orca swam away.

Being so close to an Orca underwater is perhaps akin to a religious awakening—a blessing from a consciousness apart from one's own, a blessing that made me feel that all is right with the world. Everything seemed to gel. Perhaps I was no longer scared of success; perhaps I learned, finally, to enjoy the moment and appreciate the world.

And while I was still in this state, seven Orcas approached, a wall of black-and-white bodies closing down on me. Like the other encounters, our meeting was fairly brief. But, for once, I wasn't afraid as they zoomed up at me. I didn't think of their teeth. I thought only of their beauty.

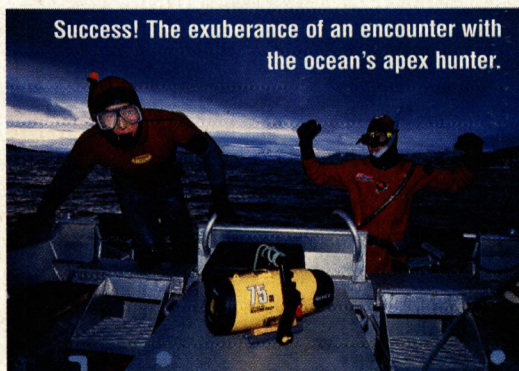
I am now ready for my next Orca encounter. Bring it on. 🐬



Rounding up dinner.

approached the boat and rose up out of the water to get a better look. They were rewarded by our "oohs" and "ahs" and, when it wasn't pouring, by the clicks of our cameras.

We also watched them slap their tails against the surface of the water, along with head-butting and jaw-snapping (behavior that may be an



Success! The exuberance of an encounter with the ocean's apex hunter.



Getting the shot.

orcas. • big animal encounters
orcas. • big animal encounters
orcas. • big animal encounters

FRESHWATER AFFECTI

1,000 POUNDS OF
BURNING LOVE



The manatee slowly raises its head to my mask. It looks like a tuskless walrus—flabby jowls, bristly whiskers, a thick leathery skin—an ugly face at first glance. I find it hard to believe that these are the mermaids of legend. Hardly the face and body of a sexy seductress!

ELVIS SIGHTING

It was an unusually chilly week in January. With the air temperature struggling to break 30°F, I braved an already wet wetsuit for a 7:00 AM dip at one of the most popular sites called Three Sisters. My reward—nearly 20 manatees crowded together, sharing their warmth on a bright sand patch. Among the group gathered there was a female called “Elvis,” so named by locals because of a large scar on her back resembling an “E.”

For the next two hours, Elvis never wandered far from my side. When I rubbed her smooth underside, and especially the hollow at the base of her flipper (a Manatee “erogenous zone”), Elvis was obviously in complete bliss. She honestly seemed to enjoy the contact and attention as much as I did.

Several years ago this spot was designated an manatee sanctuary. Part of the area is roped off, creating a “manatees-only zone.” Snorkelers can interact with animals outside of the boundaries, but are not permitted to swim into the enclosure. This gives the animals a much needed breather from the crowds of eager human visitors.

Another manatee spot is Blue Springs, on the Upper Homosassa River. As soon as we arrived, a young manatee with exceptionally warty skin came right up to our pontoon boat, and turned out to be patiently waiting for me as I hurriedly geared up. When we dropped anchor, it began chewing up and down the length



ON

BY BRANDON COLE

of the anchor line. I imagine the rope was serving as a sort of dental floss. It was totally fixated with the anchor line and took no notice of me as I slid into the water and settled beside the boat to watch its antics.

Like so many of its brethren, this manatee had numerous scars carved in its thick hide by a boat's propeller. (Thankfully, many of these wounds usually are not serious enough to result in death. It is the force of impact with boat hulls at high speed, however, that is often times fatal.) These scars are grim proof that the manatees have not yet learned to fear boats. They should also be a reminder that boaters need to exercise much more caution when traversing manatee waters.

THE BELOVED "SEA COW"

Florida's Crystal River area is one of the only places in the

world where humans have the opportunity to come face to face with these beloved "sea cows." The majority of the estimated 3,000 surviving manatees can be found concentrated in central Florida during the winter months.

Cooling ocean temperatures force the manatees to move inshore and up into the warmer spring-fed riverways that remain a constant 72 to 74°F. Manatees don't have an insulating layer of blubber to protect them from the cold like many marine mammals do. Prolonged exposure to 60°F ocean water can actually lead to hypothermia and death.

Manatees spend much of their time sleeping and soaking up the warmth. They also devote hours each day to feeding, and eating from 100 to 300 pounds of sea grasses per day. The average normal adult manatee is eight to 10 feet long and weigh about 1,000 pounds.

manatees • big animal
counters • manatees • big
animal • encounters •
manatees • big animal



Snorkeling is the easiest way to interact with manatees. Scuba bubbles usually frighten the animals.

MEETING MERMAIDS

The most popular places to swim with manatees are the Crystal and Homosassa rivers in west central Florida. Prime viewing months are December through the end of February. If at all possible, try to time your trip for a cold period.

Grim Future?

The plight of the Florida manatee has finally captured the public's full attention, and awareness of the existing problems is at an all time high. There are numerous conservation groups tirelessly campaigning to save the manatees. Manatees in aquariums, parks and rehabilitation centers draw huge crowds. Both are helping to further educate the public. Laws protecting the manatee are already in effect, and further safeguards are currently being implemented. Certainly the boat operators motoring along the coast and in the inland waterways will need to be more careful. And, waterfront development will have to be curbed to stop the destruction of the few remaining areas serving as manatee feeding and breeding grounds. In addition, those feeding areas near winter refuge sites that have already been destroyed will have to be restored—a formidable and expensive task to be sure.

Man and manatee can coexist side by side in harmony, but we must be willing to work for it.

Cousin Dugong

The dugong, *Dugong dugon*, has only subtle morphological differences from the manatee—no toenails on the flippers, and tailflukes more like a whale or dolphin rather than a giant paddle. It is also slightly smaller than the manatee, with adults typically six to nine feet long and weighing 600 to 900 pounds. Habitat and diet are very similar to its cousin, as is reproduction.

Dugongs are found from Eastern Africa to the Solomon Islands, but numbers are small throughout most of its range. (Curiously enough, fossil records hint that the dugong was once widespread in the Americas, especially during the Pleistocene epoch. It appears the dugong was eventually displaced by the manatee.) The largest concentration (a few hundred?) is found around the Cape York Peninsula in northeastern Australia. Although the dugong enjoys protection in most places, it too is in danger of extinction. Some traditional hunting by Aborigines is still allowed, while many also drown each year in gill nets used by commercial fishermen working near shore. The author isn't aware of an Indo-Pacific equivalent to Crystal River, Florida, where people can so easily and reliably encounter dugongs, though sightings in Vanuatu, the Philippines, and Shark Bay, Australia, seem to occur regularly enough to offer the best chance.



Photo/David Fleetham

Weekends are likely to be very busy, with boatloads of snorkelers on each group of manatees. For more personal encounters, schedule your snorkeling tours during the week. Be prepared to start the day early, as you will most likely have the best

luck in the mornings before the manatees have dispersed for their afternoon feeding.

Snorkeling is usually the best way to get close to the manatees. Scuba bubbles are more likely to scare the animals away; besides, scuba is totally unnecessary with the very shallow depths.

Most people choose to wear a wetsuit to help ward off the morning chill. A few things to remember when swimming with the manatees: Be constantly on the lookout if you are piloting your own boat and obey all regulations; don't chase the animals—let the curious ones approach you; move slowly and avoid stirring up the bottom sediment; at all times, be gentle with the animals and treat them with respect—friendly ones will return the favor and provide you with an unforgettable experience. »

For the Scrapbook

Manatees are among the most cooperative subjects a photographer is ever likely to work with. For those interested in taking photographs, plan on using mid-wide to super-wide angle lenses—the Nikonos camera set up with a 15mm or 20mm lens, or housed SLRs with fisheye to 24mm lenses, are quite effective. Video cameras also work very well with the manatees. Strobe light is usually unnecessary because you are in extremely shallow water (floating sediments would make backscatter a problem anyways).

WINGED GIANTS

"YOU'D BETTER BEHAVE OR THE DEVILFISH WILL GET YOU,"

Yapese parents admonish their children. They warn, "If you don't behave, he'll jump on top of you, fold you in his wings and carry you underwater!"

BY CHRISTOPHER J. CROWLEY

their lunch and improving the health of the manta in the bargain.

It gets better. Hugging the sand and moving very slowly, you can creep forward until you are beneath the flight path. A manta glides toward you with almost imperceptible undulations of its wings. As it approaches, you can peer into that three-foot-wide maw and see the ribs down in the gullet. You are close enough to see the squadron of tiny striped fish riding in the slipstream just below the mouth.

This undersea flying-saucer suddenly looms above you like the immense mother ship hovering over Devil's Tower in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. The rolled-up cephalic folds bracketing the mouth look like horns when viewed in silhouette. After seeing this, the reason for the nickname "devilfish" makes sense.

After several laps, the manta banks and leaves.

There's no point in trying to prolong the encounter. You can kick with all your might against the current, but with a couple languid beats of its wings the manta will leave you hanging far behind.

Even the surface intervals on Yap offer the chance to observe manta behavior. Gazing out over the water, still daydreaming about mantas gliding by at the cleaning station, I'm startled by a sudden eruption in the water. In front of me, a black trapezoid bursts out of the water. There is a flash of white and a thunderous splash. One of the giant mantas has just leapt completely out of the water, somersaulted and crashed back to the surface. Perhaps a naughty Yapese child has just been caught under its wings.

I must have been very, very bad. The Manta Rays have carried me under 16 times during two visits to the island. Be bad too. Maybe you'll be lucky, and the devilfish will get you.

Mesmerized by the vision above her head, this photographer has forgotten about the camera in her hand.

Photo/Aslind Witte and Casey Mahaney

YAP IS A TINY FRECKLE ON THE FACE OF THE OCEAN between Guam and Palau. It offers a big opportunity for a rare animal encounter—coming face-to-face with the giant Manta Ray (*Manta alfredi*). Mantas are regularly spotted during scenic dives on the hard-coral reefs fringing the island. However, the mantas prefer to patrol the channels that cut inland. At M'il Channel, divers can experience close encounters with resident rays at cleaning stations like the Plateau or Car Wash.

Aptly named, Car Wash is a small coral patch surrounded by sand at a depth of about 70 feet. Mantas form clusters at the cleaning station, circling six feet above the coral patch like jumbo jets in a holding pattern around a busy airport. Kneeling on the sand, it's mesmerizing to watch them cruise round and round, swooping up and down.

As a manta circles, cleaner wrasses rise up from the coral and rendezvous. They peck delicately at the manta, earning



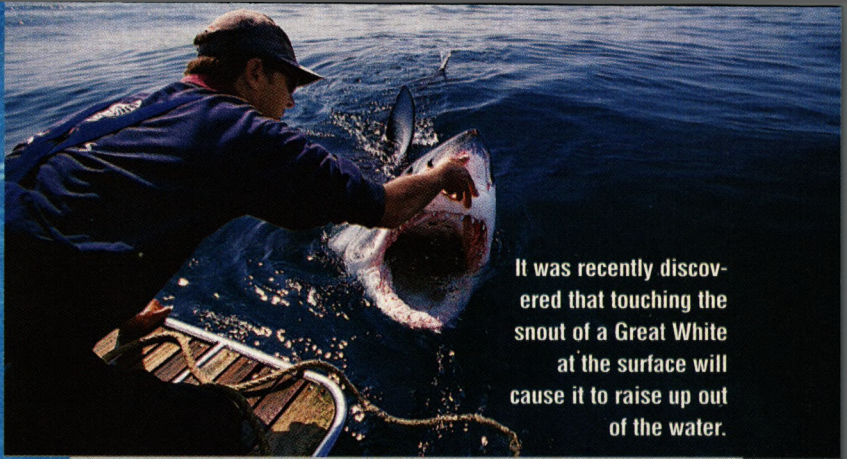
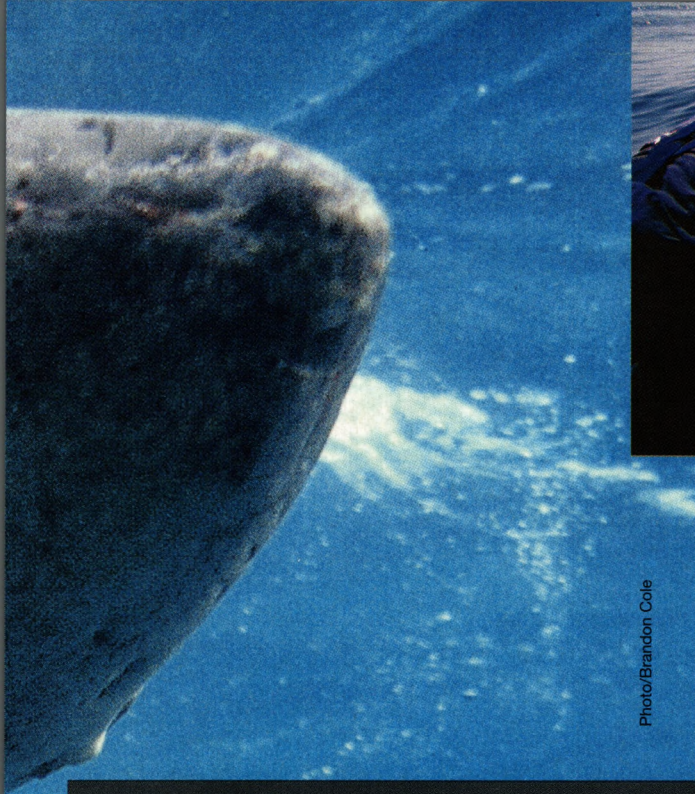
THE PLAYER

GREAT WHITES SIT ON THE
TOP RUNG OF THE
OCEAN'S STEPLADDER OF
SURVIVAL.

Octopus eats crab, seal eats octopus, Great White Shark eats seal. Man as an entrée, though, is not on the menu. Yet, the myth is still being perpetuated through films and books that feed off our most morbid fear. After three trips to South Africa to view sharks, we've managed to come home, all body parts intact, with our addiction to witnessing the greatest predator in the ocean temporarily satisfied.

BY STUART AND MICHELE WESTMORLAND

big animal encounters.
great whites
big animal encounters.
great whites
big animal encounters.



It was recently discovered that touching the snout of a Great White at the surface will cause it to raise up out of the water.

Photo/Brandon Cole

Two hours north of Capetown on the east coast, the small fishing village of Gansbaai sits on a rugged coastline near a lighthouse, situated on ominously named Danger Point. This area is known as the Cape of Storms because you never know what is in store for you at any point in the day. The day can start with sunny skies and flat seas and turn into a gale within hours. And in order to experience one of the ocean's apex predators, you must spend time on the water.

On the day we headed out with good weather surrounding us, our destination was a narrow strip of water between Geyser Rock and Dyer Island called Shark Alley. Geyser Rock is a rookery for hundreds of Cape Fur Seals, while Dyer Island is home for penguins. Meal service is provided for the sharks at any time of the day.

A hundred or so yards from the entrance of Shark Alley, Andre Hartman, our captain, slowed the boat and his crew quickly established the chum slick and dropped the cage over the side of the boat. As the clock ticked away, Andre weaved through many stories of spearfishing on the coast. At 47, his face is etched with years spent at sea.

"I was terrified of sharks," said Andre, his eyes watching the bait.

Asking what changed his mind, Andre responded that his fear has been replaced with respect. "I competed in spearfishing tournaments for many years and had encounters with 23 Whites. Only two tried to bite, probably because I had a fish on the end of my spear." Personally, I could not imagine staring face to teeth at a Great White without any bars in between. He explained that on several occasions, he observed sharks from the safety of the kelp. As scientists are discovering, it

seems that because of the lower fat content compared to seals, humans are not actually a meal of choice. Looking at Andre's race-horse thin physique, he should have no worries.

"Shark on the bait!"

Everyone jumped into position. Andre immediately took his place on the platform at the stern.

"We have a player," Andre shouted and the show began.

The massive Great White circled the boat methodically, drawn by the chum slick floating on the surface. It stalked the bait hanging on the line several times before approaching for a test bite. As Andre pulled the tantalizing tidbit closer to the stern, the shark rose up to bite, and Andre reached with one hand to tickle the underside of its nose. Within seconds, a large gaping mouth appeared, and Andre pulled his hand back from eminent danger.

Why would anyone attempt such a daring move?

Andre explained that in the early days he observed the sharks trying to bite the engines or the transom of the boat. Feeling the hard metal, the sharks would spook and leave. "I didn't like the idea of the animal hurting itself then vanishing not to be seen again. So one day, when I had a shark that was moving slowly toward the motor, I pushed her nose away. That is when I discovered it would raise up out of the water after feeling something soft and warm." Since then, Andre has perfected his technique and protected many sharks from becoming injured.

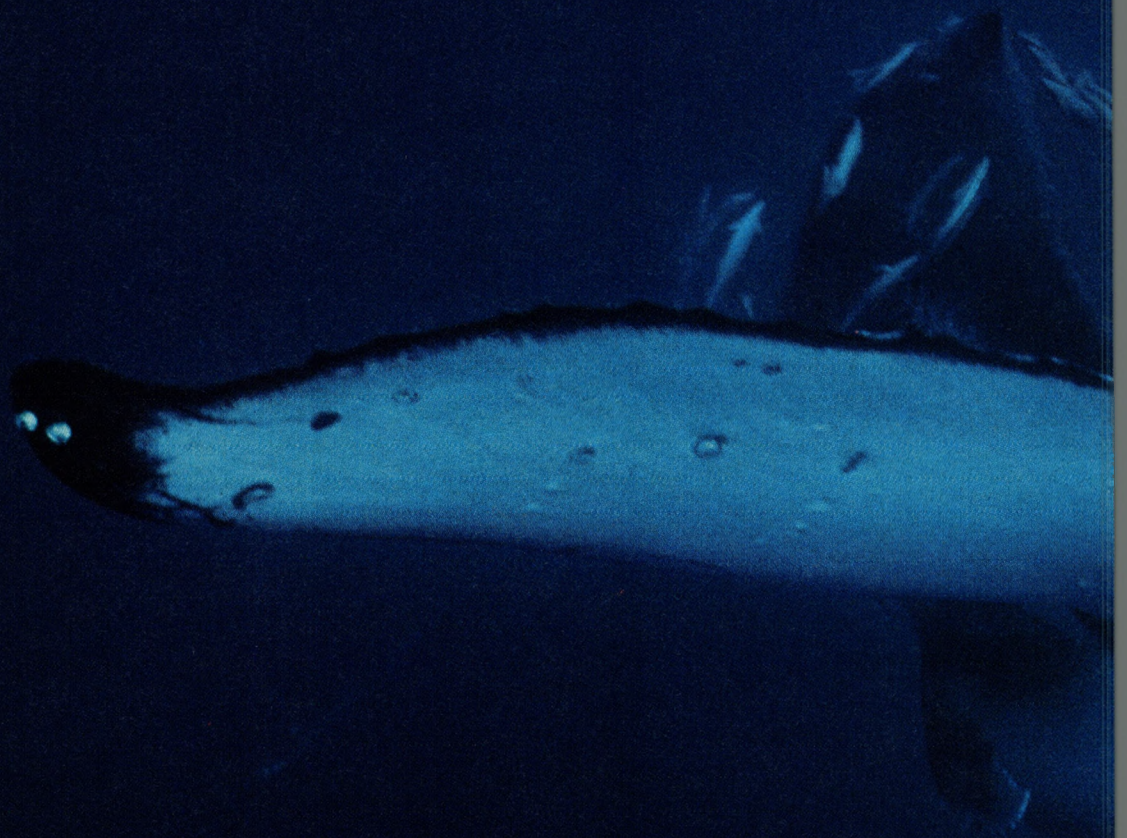
I was ready to face the challenge of the cage. Water temperatures off South Africa can fluctuate between 50 and 62°F, requiring a drysuit for this cold water wimp. All the cloth and extra weight can be cumbersome, but it was all well worth it on this day. We had four sharks in the area and none of them shy of the cage. As one shark would pass within inches, another circled the boat sizing things up. One big female took exception of another White in her territory and quickly turned to bite the intruder, teeth flashing in the sunlight. After two hours of jaw-dropping action, it was time to retreat to the warmth of the sun. I, like Andre, gained new respect for this much maligned animal.

Great White Sharks are protected in South Africa as they should be throughout the rest of the world. Studies by the scientific community continue to eliminate man's most basic fear of this great predator. Andre Hartman takes it a step beyond with his ability to see and touch the shark in a way no one else can.

Special thanks to Andre Hartman and JP Botha of Marine Dynamics.

great whites • big animal encounters • great whites • big animal encounters • great whites • big animal encounters

WHALE




Prior to my first whale watching expedition back in 1992, I was under the illusion, as many people are, that during a one-week whale watching adventure the majority of my time would be spent actually watching and photographing whales. Experience has proven that most time on these trips is in fact spent watching *for* whales. My recent trip to Tonga was no exception.

big animal encounters:
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big animal encounters:
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TALES

FROM THE ANCIENT KINGDOM OF TONGA

BY TAMMY PELUSO



A mother and calf keep close. Humpbacks come to the warm waters off Tonga to give birth and mate.

It is estimated that each winter, between June and October, more than 300 whales make the arduous journey from Antarctica to Tonga's warm waters, where they mate and birth their young. I was land-based in Vava'u, the northern most grouping of Tonga's islands, and had reasonable luck seeing the whales above water during the first few days of my trip. Then the weather turned for a couple of days, but the winds finally ceased, easing the small craft warning.

John Beauchamp, the captain of the boat I was hiring, explained that strangely, the whales often disappeared for several days after big storms. He agreed to take me out, but thought it was unlikely we would have any encounters.

Photo/Amos Nachoum

humpback whales • big
small encounters: humpba
humpback whales • big
small encounters: humpba

A juvenile's curiosity is often the catalyst of an unforgettable encounter.



Photo/Amos Nachoum

He was right. There I was in Tonga with a boat to myself, under clear sunny skies, on a glass flat sea—and there were no whales. I had just about decided that this was my last whale

watching trip. Then we got the call.

Ongo Kaihea, the captain of the large catamaran *Whalesong*, called to advise us that they were with a mother and calf nearby.

"See, they're not all gone," I gloated. We arrived a few minutes later and sure enough the whales were there, but so was a boat full of noisy snorkelers, which meant that the whales would have to be extremely friendly if an encounter was going to be possible. To make my task even more difficult, I would have to follow the accepted rules of whale engagement and be especially polite to the snorkelers on the other boat, since they did in fact spot the whales and call us over.

Tonga's whale watching rules are more liberal than most, but they still maintain a strict non-harassment policy. Boats can move in the vicinity of the whales, but ultimately the whales have to come to the snorkelers. So, for nearly an hour, I agonized while we took turns trying to attract the inter-

est of the baby whale and its mother. The whales were not running away, but they were not showing remarkable interest either. I sensed that both captains were getting edgy and knew the attempted encounter would not last much longer.

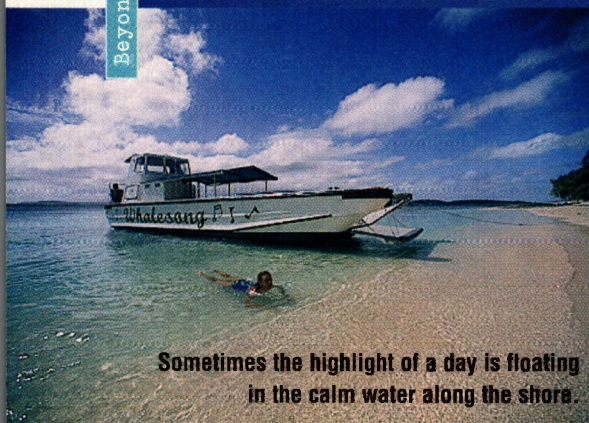
Looking around, I noticed that the snorkelers were busy trying to re-board their boat, and the whales were serenely cruising along the island's rocky shoreline. I turned to John, and said, "Well, it's time to try a fly-by."

"Fly-bys" occur when the animals are curious enough to come in close for a look, but are not inclined to

Beyond the Tail

It is without question the Humpbacks that lure big animal enthusiasts to Tonga, but whales are only a small part of the attraction.

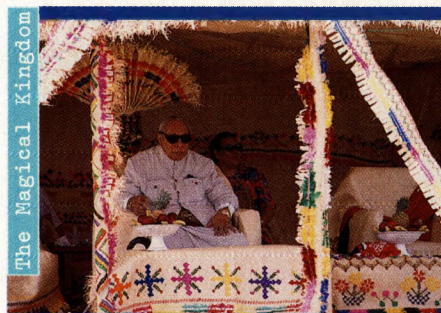
Tonga is best known by cruising yachties, who travel from around the globe to enjoy its



Sometimes the highlight of a day is floating in the calm water along the shore.

170 picturesque islands and abundance of calm anchorages. Most of the islands are fringed with healthy hard coral gardens, suitable for both diving and snorkeling. And many have intriguing caves and caverns large enough to drive small boats into.

The Magical Kingdom



King Taufa'ahau Tupou.

linger. The odds for success improve drastically if you are the only one in

big animal encounters:
humpback whales
big animal encounters:
humpback whales

Caribbean Connection: Humpback Whales of the Silver Banks

Each year, beginning in December, North Atlantic Humpback Whales, fat from eight to nine months of feeding in the north Atlantic, begin arriving at the Silver Banks, a large area of some 200 square miles, north of the Dominican Republic. Mothers with calves born somewhere on the long journey and other females, along with many male whales, show up in huge numbers—a recent study estimated between 3,000 and 5,000 will pass through the area each season. Mothers nurture their calves and other females go into estrus to begin the mating cycle. Males compete for the attention of available females, performing spectacular, aggressive displays of breaching, tail and fin slapping and other boisterous behaviors. Even females with new calves are competed for, with virtually every one accompanied by a male, or “escort,” who may be extremely protective, even aggressive, to interlopers.

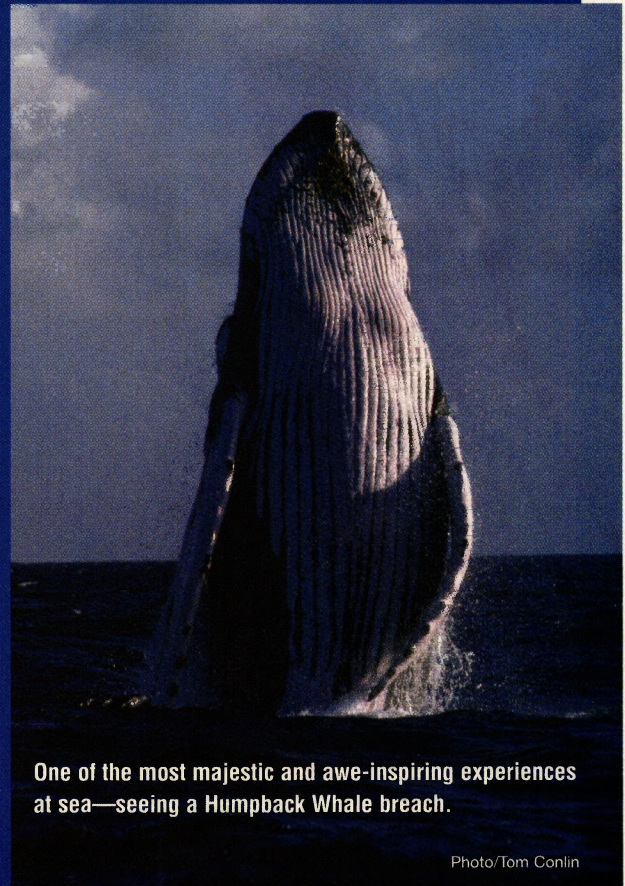
For visitors to the Banks during this season, it is a fantastic experience. On my trip, the first powerful emotion came from simply realizing the presence and sheer numbers of these beautiful, majestic animals. For one who has fantasized about whales and worried for their survival, it was an incredible feeling to be in their midst, so many of them, with so many new-born calves.

The week also gave us a fascinating education into their habits and characteristics. The dive operators providing the Silver Banks whale excursions give their clients seminars and on-going explanations about the whales, providing a new sense of appreciation. They also all adhere to a government approved, soft, in-water encounter protocol that allows snorkelers to be in the water with the whales.

Our days, from about 8:00 AM until lunchtime, and again from 2:00 until after 5:00 PM, were spent ranging out in small boats, scanning the horizon for signs of blows (the vapor of a whale’s exhalations), breaches (jumps out of the water), tail slaps and so on. We would then move toward the whales we spotted, and if they allowed proximity, slip into the water with them. We took a lot of topside photos and a got a few shots underwater, photos of animals that most people will never, ever experience, except in imagination. For all of us on the trip, it was a remarkable week. This time with great whales was one of the most moving experiences I’ve ever had in the sea; I know that this “once” will never be enough.

—Al Hornsby

For diving the Silver Banks, the season runs January through April, contact: Aggressor Fleet (800) 348-2628 www.aggressor.com • Bottom Time Adventures (800) 234-8464 www.bottomtimeadventures.com • Peter Hughes Diving (800) 932-6237 www.peterhughes.com



One of the most majestic and awe-inspiring experiences at sea—seeing a Humpback Whale breach.

Photo/Tom Conlin

the water, but regardless, encounters are usually painfully short.

Knowing it was likely that I would only have one chance, I slipped quiet-

ing. Seconds later I saw them cruising straight over the reef in less than 20 feet of water. I dove down and mama and baby hesitated slightly. *No, no, no,*

course and headed right toward me. The encounter was not very long, but for those few moments I was the sole object of the whales’ attention and it

was truly awesome. Entranced by their enormous size and majestic beauty, I hung suspended in the blue for as long as my lungs would allow, savoring every moment of this extraordinary encounter. Then, as quickly as they came, they were gone. But those few precious moments were enough to hook me, and by the time I

By sheer chance, one of my bad weather/no-whale days occurred during Vava’u’s annual agricultural show: a festive happening where locals display their finest crops with hopes of receiving awards and praise from the royal family. My disappointment at missing whales quickly evaporated when I saw King Taufa’ahau Tupou and the rest of the royal family reclining majestically upon their mat-laden dais. Their attire was modest and their surroundings surprisingly simple, but the lack of gold, baubles and precious stones did nothing to diminish the decidedly regal ambience. After the King addressed his people, a bevy of island beauties performed traditional dances for the royal family, and the princess graciously presented agricultural awards to the local community. The mood was joyous and after the formalities, I wandered the fairgrounds through a jungle of local flora and a sea of smiling faces. I was still a little sad to have missed another chance to see the whales that day, but glad to have the chance, if only for a few hours, to experience Tonga’s other magical kingdom.

ly into the water in the direction the mother and calf appeared to be head-

don’t stop now, I gurgled into my snorkel. Miraculously, they altered

had boarded the boat, I was already scheduling a return trip to Tonga. 🐳

humpback whales • big
humpback whales • big
humpback whales • big

getting there



dolphins

BAHAMAS **BEST TIME TO VISIT:** Year-round. **TOPSIDE CLIMATE:** Averages 80°F. **WATER TEMPERATURE:** Averages 77°F. **EXCHANGE RATE:** USD accepted. **TIME DIFFERENCE:** Eastern Standard Time. **CONTACTS:** Bimini Dive Center Interaction: wild (800) 348-4644 www.biminiundersea.com • Bottom Time Adventures Interaction: wild (800) 234-8464 www.bottomtimeadventures.com • Brendals Dive Center Interaction: wild (800) 780-9941 www.brendal.com • Dream Too Little Bahama Bank, Bahamas (boat leaves from Palm Beach) Interaction: wild (888) 277-8181 www.dolphindreamteam.com • Nekton Diving Cruises Interaction: wild (800) 899-6753 www.niktoncruises.com • Sea Fever Diving Cruises Interaction: wild (800) 443-3837 www.seafever.com • UNEXSO Freeport, Bahamas Interaction: semi-captive (dives in open water with trained dolphins) (800) 992-DIVE www.unexo.com

COZUMEL **BEST TIME TO VISIT:** Year-round. **TOPSIDE CLIMATE:** Averages 80°F. **WATER TEMPERATURE:** Averages 85°F. **EXCHANGE RATE:** 1.00 (USD) = 9.7 (Peso). USD accepted. **TIME DIFFERENCE:** Eastern Standard Time minus 1 hour. **CONTACTS:** Chankanaab National Marine Park Interaction: captive (011) 52-98-494757 www.dolphindiscovery.com

HONDURAS **BEST TIME TO VISIT:** Year-round. **TOPSIDE CLIMATE:** Averages 80°F. **WATER TEMPERATURE:** Averages 85°F. **EXCHANGE RATE:** 1.00 (USD) = 15.00 (Lempira). USD accepted. **TIME DIFFERENCE:** Eastern Standard Time minus 1 hour. **CONTACTS:** Anthony's Key Resort Interaction: semi-captive (dives in open water with trained dolphins) (800) 227-3483 www.anthonys-key.com

orcas

NORWAY **BEST TIME TO VISIT:** November only. **TOPSIDE CLIMATE:** Averages 37°F. **WATER TEMPERATURE:** Averages 43°F. **EXCHANGE RATE:** 1.00 (USD) = 8.5 (Krones). USD accepted. **TIME DIFFERENCE:** Eastern Standard Time plus 6 hours. **CONTACTS:** Norwegian Tourist Board (212) 885-9755 • BigAnimals.com (877) 229-4253 www.biganimals.com

manatees

FLORIDA **BEST TIME TO VISIT:** December through February. **TOPSIDE CLIMATE:** Averages 55°F. **WATER TEMPERATURE:** Averages 72°F. **EXCHANGE RATE:** USD accepted. **TIME DIFFERENCE:** Eastern Standard Time. **CONTACTS:** Citrus County, Florida (800) 587-6667 www.visitcitrus.com • American Pro Diving Center (800) 291-DIVE www.americanprodiving.com • American's River Rendezvous (800) 291-3483 • Best Western Crystal Resort & Crystal Lodge Dive Center (352) 795-6798 (Dive Shop) (800) 435-4409 (Resort) • Bird's Underwater Dive Center (800) 771-2763 • Crystal River Manatee Dive & Tour (352) 795-1333 • Homosassa Riverside Resort (800) 442-2040

mantas

YAP **BEST TIME TO VISIT:** December through April. **TOPSIDE CLIMATE:** Averages 80°F. **WATER TEMPERATURE:** Averages 80°F. **EXCHANGE RATE:** USD accepted. **TIME DIFFERENCE:** Eastern Standard Time plus 15 hours. **CONTACTS:** Federated States of Micronesia www.fm/yap.htm • Yap Visitors Bureau (011) 691-350-2298 www.visit Yap.com • Manta Ray Bay Hotel & Yap Divers (800) 634-5555 www.mantaray.com • PATA www.magnificentmicronesia.com • Trader's Ridge Resort (877) 657-4695 www.tradersridgeresort.com

great whites

SOUTH AFRICA **BEST TIME TO VISIT:** April through October. **TOPSIDE CLIMATE:** Averages 66°F. **WATER TEMPERATURE:** Averages 55°F. **EXCHANGE RATE:** 1.00 (USD) = 7.5 (SA Rand). USD accepted. **TIME DIFFERENCE:** Eastern Standard Time plus 9 hours. **CONTACTS:** South African Tourism Board (800) 822-5368 (eastern U.S.) (800) 782-9772 (western U.S.) • South African Airways (800) 722-9675 www.flysaa.com • Kleinbaai Bed & Breakfast (011) 27-2838-41005 • Marine Dynamics (011) 27-28-384-1005 www.dive.co.za

humpback whales

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC See *Humpback Whales of the Silver Banks*, page 71.

TONGA **BEST TIME TO VISIT:** July through November. **TOPSIDE CLIMATE:** Averages 76°F. **WATER TEMPERATURE:** Averages 76°F. **EXCHANGE RATE:** 1.00 (USD) = 1.99900 TOP (Tonga Pa'anga). USD accepted. **TIME DIFFERENCE:** Eastern Standard Time plus 18 hours. **CONTACTS:** Tonga Visitors Bureau (011) 676-25-334 www.tongaonline.com www.tongatapu.net.to/tonga/islands/visitbureau.htm • Sailing Safaris, Vava'u (011) 676-70-650 www.candw.to • Coral Island Cruises/Royal Sunset Cruises (011) 676-24-923 www.coralislandcruises.co.nz www.kalianet/cruise/index • Beluga Diving, Vava'u (011) 676-70-327 e-mail: beluga@kalianet.to • Tongan Beach Resort, Vava'u (011) 676-70-380 e-mail: tonganbeach@kalianet.to • Paradise Hotel, Vava'u (011) 676-70-211 e-mail: Paradise@candw.to • Marcella Resort, Vava'u (011) 676-70-687 • Happy Ha'apai Divers, Ha'apai (011) 676-60-600 www.dive-info.com/tonga • Nai'a Cruises (800) 903-0272 www.naia.com.fj

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A large whale shark is shown swimming horizontally across the frame in deep blue water. Several divers are visible near its back, highlighting its massive size. The shark's skin is covered in small, light-colored spots.

The grim-faced maw of the harmless, though massive, Whale Shark. Inset right: Jeweled Moray.

A close-up shot of a jeweled moray eel resting on a coral reef. The eel's body is covered in iridescent, jewel-like patterns of yellow, orange, and red. The background shows the textured surface of the coral.

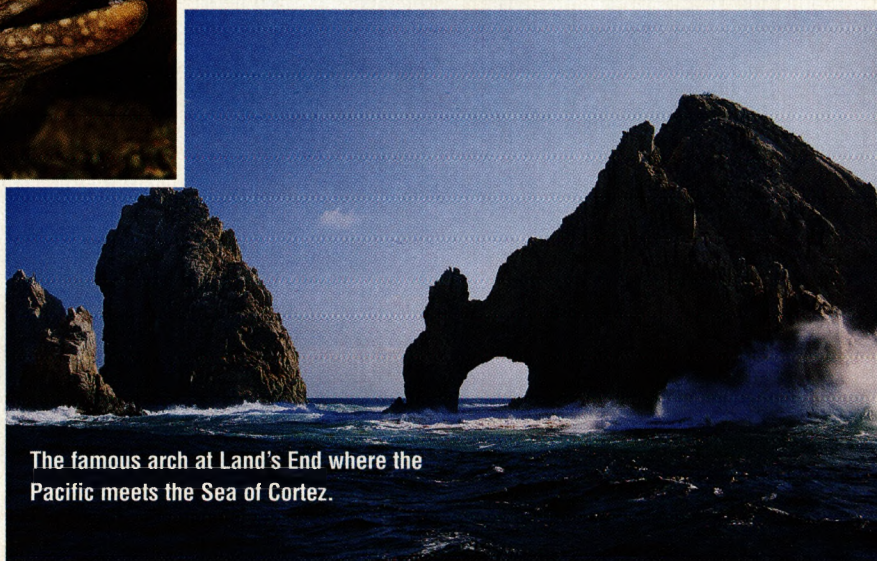
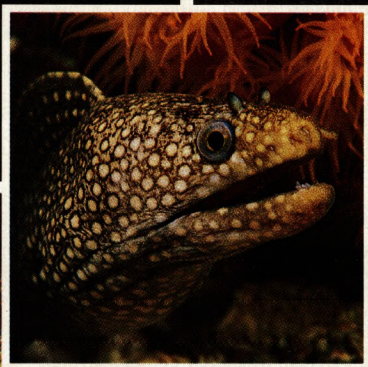
Big Adventure in Cortez

The Wild Blue Yonder

When I was a kid growing up in Little Rock, Arkansas, my Uncle Herb used to take me hunting and fishing in the woods, lakes and streams around home. Every once in a while he would leave me to my own devices, while he headed off to Mexico's Sea of Cortez to fish with a few of his lifelong pals. I couldn't wait for them to return with tales of adventure and stories about fish the size of the boat. They had photographs and fillets to verify their comments about the ones they caught, so I guess I was inclined to believe what Herb told me later about the ones that got away, "Big as the boat. Some a lot bigger.

Get a load of that, kid!"

by Marty Snyderman








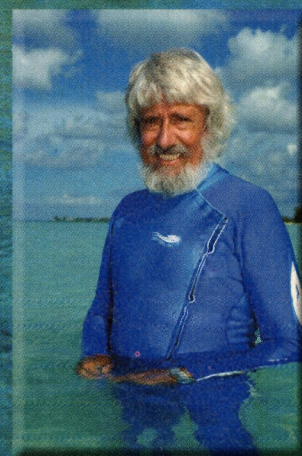
The famous arch at Land's End where the Pacific meets the Sea of Cortez.

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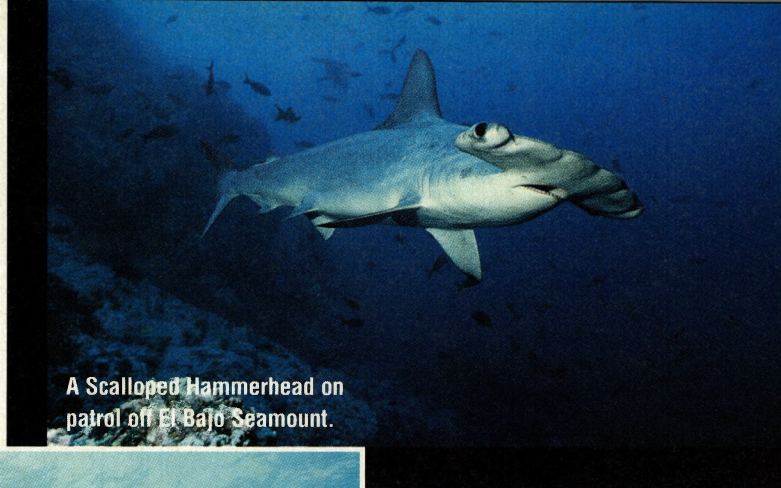
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Big Adventures in Cortez

I sat frog-eyed and slack-jawed for hours on end, as I listened intently to every word of my uncle's sea stories. To me, Uncle Herb's tales of adventure made the Sea of Cortez the Africa of the underwater realm. I was certain that if Tarzan had been a scuba diver he would have met Juanita, and together they would have explored the waters along Mexico's Baja Peninsula. Afterward, I used to look at a globe and study the lay of the land in that far away place, and I would repeatedly promise myself that someday I, too, would explore this wilderness. No question about it,



A Scalloped Hammerhead on patrol off El Bajo Seamount.



The elegant master of the sea—Manta Ray.

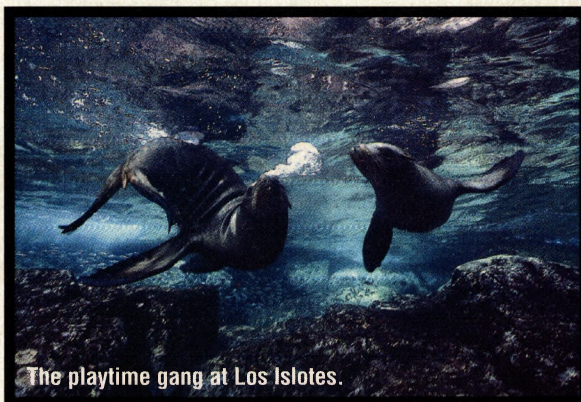
the powerful allure of Baja had a grip on my spirit way back in my youth.

Fifteen or so years later, I moved to San Diego and in one of those ways that life can be so amazing, the wilderness Uncle Herb had raved about was virtually in my backyard. Of course, a lot of things had changed in my life. For one, I had become a certified diver. But one thing that had not changed, not one iota, was the fact that the Sea of Cortez remained a vast, virtually unexplored marine wilderness. Those fortunate few who had gone before me had promised encounters with sharks, whales, dolphins, Manta Rays, sea lions and schools of fish so dense that they blocked out the sun and reefs that teemed with a marvelous variety of every imaginable creature from rainbow-colored nudibranchs to eels.

I made my first dive trip in the Cortez sometime in the late 1970s. We had to take our own compressor and be totally self-contained, but the diving was everything I had hoped it would be. Over the years, I have swam with Whale Sharks, the world's largest fish, at Gordo Bank, in

next to graceful Manta Rays, animals with 15-foot "wing-spans," that circled me dive after dive.

Few dives are more fun than being at a sea lion rookery in late summer and fall. During this time of year, a typical morning at a rookery reminds me of recess at an elementary school. Pups are beginning to explore the underwater world with a just-found sense of confidence, and the yearlings



The playtime gang at Los Islotes.

cavort in seemingly endless games of tag and chase. At first glance it all looks like good fun. But these "games of youth" are training rituals that help prepare the youngsters for the battles of dominance they will fight as adults when males

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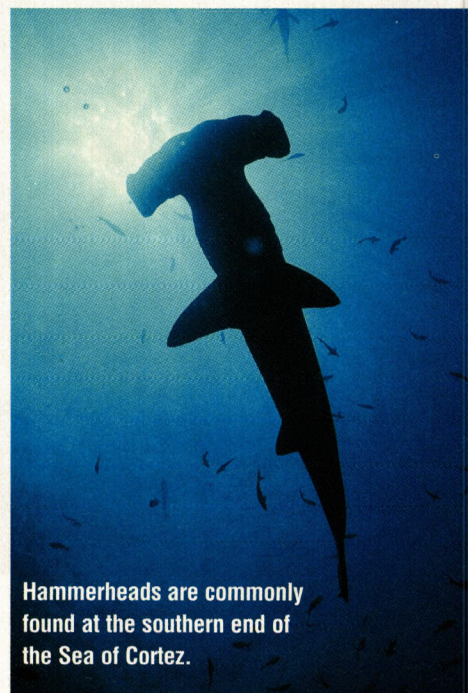
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Big Adventures in Cortez

compete in an effort to establish breeding territories, and females fight to fend off or accept the males they choose to sire their offspring.

In my family, Uncle Herb had a well-earned reputation for being able to embellish a story, and the facts be damned if it would help him get a good belly laugh at a punch line or make one of the kids think he was Little Rock's own Tarzan. But as I explored the Cortez over the years, I began to realize that when it came to Herb's tales of the



Hammerheads are commonly found at the southern end of the Sea of Cortez.

Cortez and the things he saw, I am not sure he exaggerated anything at all. There was no need.

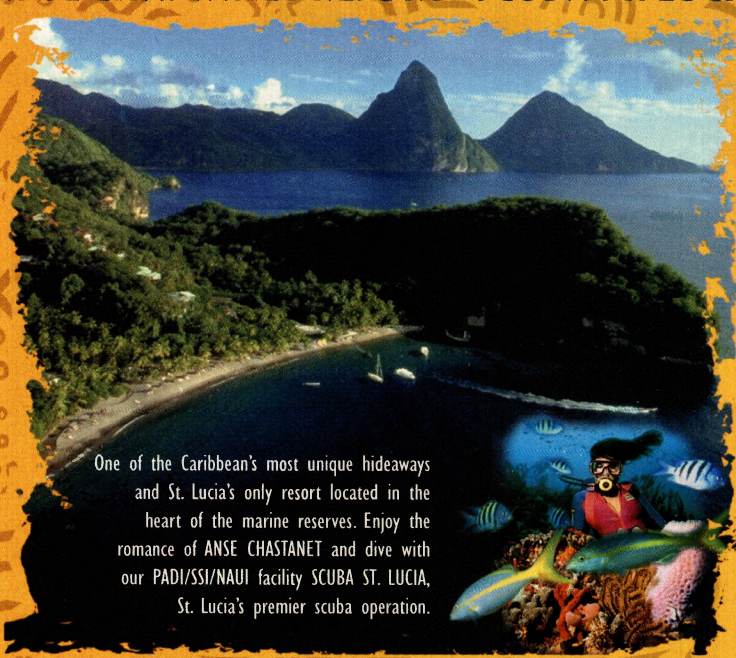
On many dives in the southern end of this 800-mile-long sea, I have seen schools of Scalloped Hammerhead Sharks fill the water over me as I held my ground and watched in awe. Sometimes dozens, sometimes hundreds of these muscular, strikingly handsome seven- to 11-foot-long sharks invaded the reef around awestruck divers.

The Hammerheads were first studied to any significant degree at the El Bajo Seamount not far from the sea lion rookery at Los Islotes, and the offshore seafan-covered pinnacles and caves of

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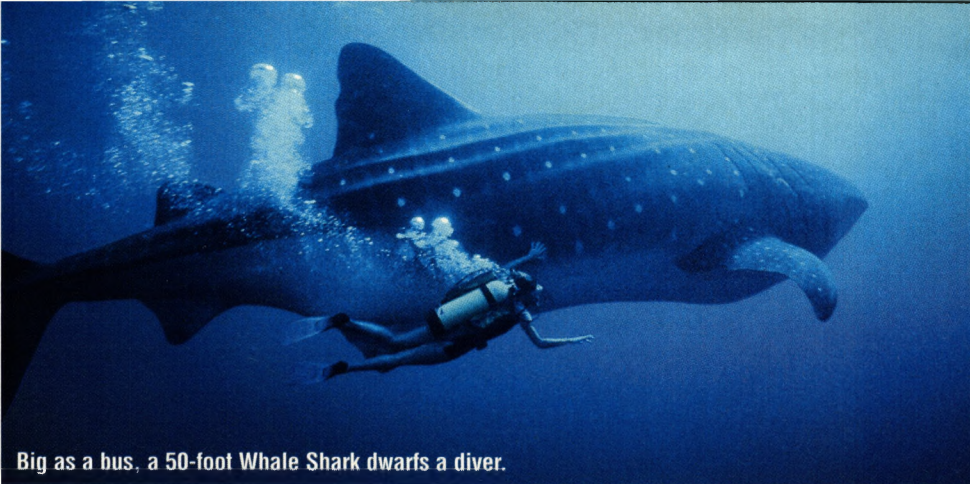
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Las Animas Island. It has been learned that the sharks gather by day, but leave the seamount to hunt as solitary predators at night, often swimming as far as 11 miles from the seamounts before returning near the break of day.

Over the years, in the Sea of Cortez I've seen pods of Killer Whales, Pilot Whales, Fin Whales, Humpback Whales and even the largest animals on earth, Blue Whales, as well as a variety of species of dolphins. There is no question in my mind that diving in the Sea of Cortez offers as good a chance on any given dive as anywhere in the world to dive with a variety of Mr. Bigs. But I wouldn't want to give the impression that the Cortez is all about, and only about, Mr. Big. Certainly, that is not the case. The Cortez has it all, and fish life teems in the nutrient-rich, current-laden waters.

I thought about many of the great experiences I had already enjoyed in the Sea of Cortez and wondered what adventures awaited me, as I was about to board the *Solmar V* for a week-long trip out of Cabo San Lucas this past August. Just like when I was a kid on the nights before Uncle Herb returned from his great adventures, anticipation and excitement prevented me from sleeping very soundly in the week before my expedition.

It had been a few years since I had dived the southern end of the Cortez, and having seen the explosion of hotels, restaurants, shops and even discos when I arrived in Los Cabos, I



Big as a bus, a 50-foot Whale Shark dwarfs a diver.

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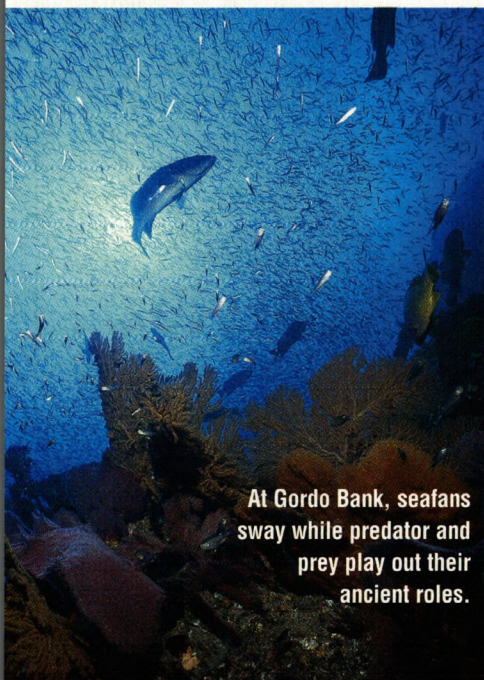


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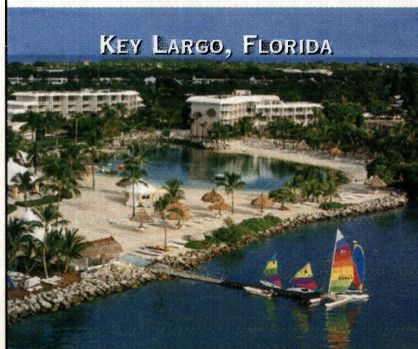
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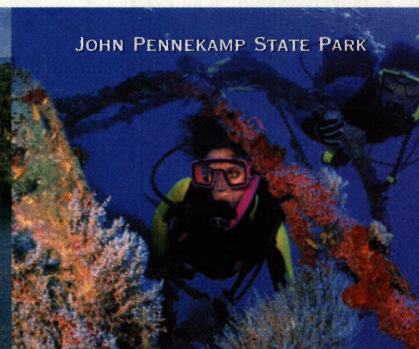
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At Gordo Bank, seafans
sway while predator and
prey play out their
ancient roles.



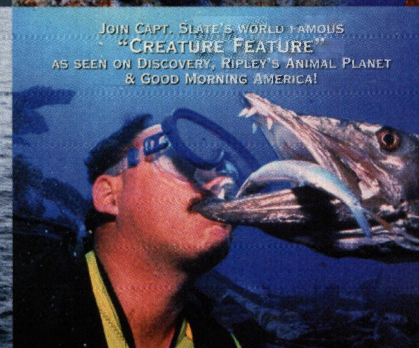
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Big Adventures in Cortez

feared the impact on the surrounding waters. The first few minutes of our first dive at the northern of Cerralvo Island alleviated some of my fears when we encountered a Manta Ray. The ray was accompanied by a pair of 2½-foot-long remoras, firmly attached to the ray's cephalic lobes.

On the sand bottom below, ocean triggerfish tried in vain to defend their nests against swarms of marauding snappers, goatfish, wrasses, butterflyfish, King Angels and more that were trying to steal the eggs. It was, indeed, a

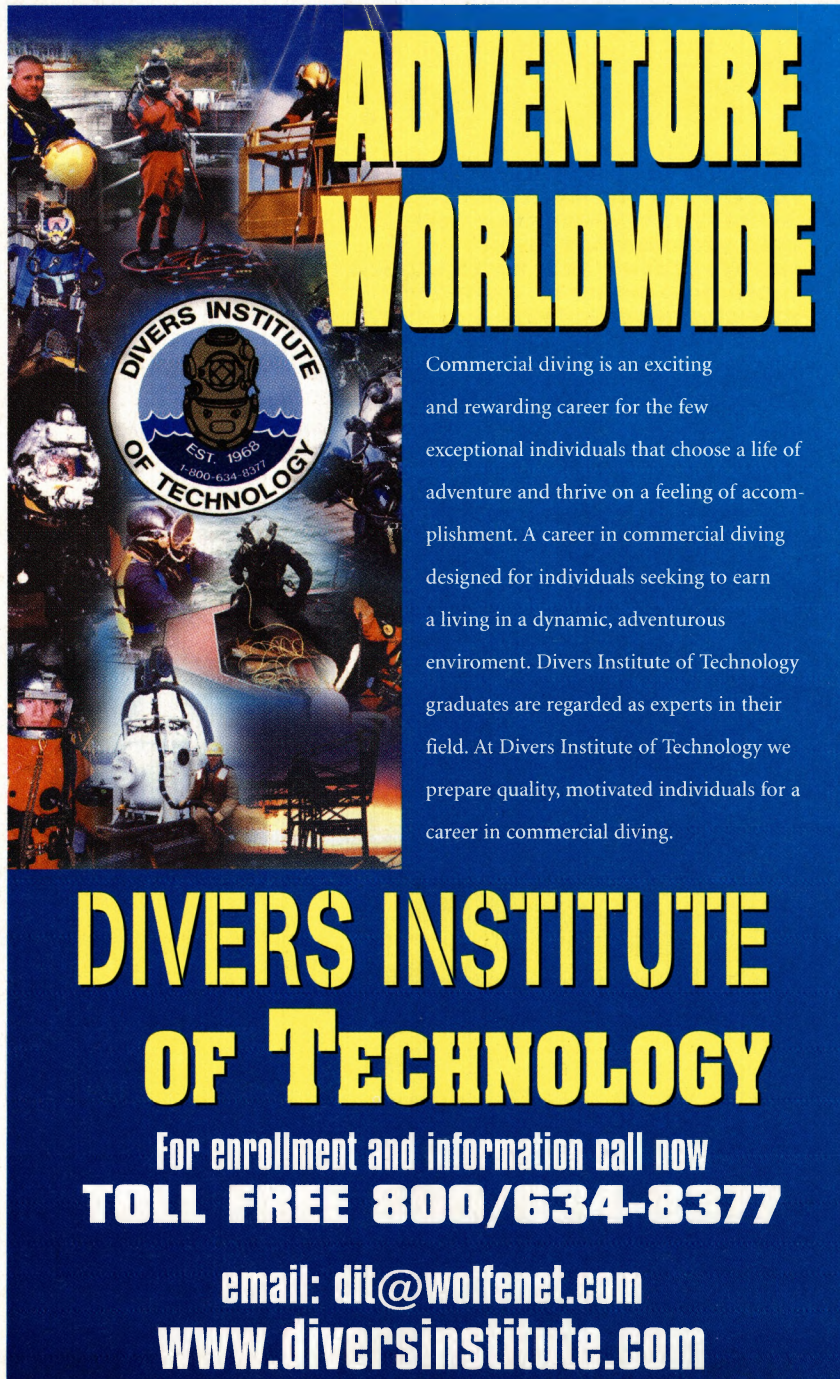
good start to a great week.

The following day we visited one of my all-time favorite sites, the sea lion rookery at Los Islotes, one of two major rookeries in the southern Cortez. In early August, the bulls were still vying for and protecting their turf, and the females were keeping a motherly eye on their pups, forcing us to keep some distance. However, some younger animals put on a good show, buzzing around us in athletic displays that clearly showed off their mastery of the aquatic world. While returning from my first dive, I

encountered another large manta as well as a squadron of four Mobula Rays, a species that people often confuse as baby mantas.


That same afternoon we went out in the pangas (skiffs) to observe a small pod of Blue Whales. An average-sized adult Blue Whale is roughly 80 feet long; much bigger than many boats. Being close to big whales in a small skiff is the kind of experience one doesn't soon forget, and you just can't help but feel like you are truly in the middle of a wilderness. An hour after sunset we were back in the drink, enjoying a great dive, interacting with a Snowflake Eel, Jewel Moray, Hairy-legged Hermit Crabs and more.

Later, at Las Animas Island, we were in for a special treat. Huge schools of baitfish swarmed in the current at the points of undersea pinnacles. The baitfish were being drilled by groupers, snappers and lightning-fast schools of jacks. The action varied from fast and furious to moments of relative calm, to fast and furious once again as the



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A big bull sea lion watches over its harem.

predators rushed the bait. This was the wild quality of the Cortez wilderness I had come for.

The same could be said for a freediving session with a pod of Bottlenose Dolphins that showed up in mid-afternoon. The dolphins were curious enough to come in for several prolonged encounters. During one, three members of our gang had five Striped Marlin come in for a once over. Wild! You don't see Striped Marlin at a trout farm. It is hard to ask for anything more, but the next afternoon, a pod of more than 100 Pilot Whales showed up in the channel near La Paz. Unphased by the pangas, the whales spy-hopped, breached and tail-lobbed repeatedly at the surface in a wonderful show.

For reasons yet undetermined, some Cortez reefs are home to astonishingly



GETTING THERE

BEST TIME TO VISIT

Mid-summer through fall.

TOPSIDE CLIMATE

Warm to hot, hot days. Some nights you might want a sweater; others you want something cold to drink!

WATER TEMPERATURE

Stating water temperatures in the Cortez can be tricky. Winter water in the southern Cortez is surprisingly cool and can dip into the upper 50s°F. This surprises some folks. When the sea "turns over" as it is said to do, water temperature tends to range from mid-to-upper 70s to mid-80s°F. Exactly when it will turn over and to what degree varies yearly. The turn over usually begins in May or June, but the best diving period doesn't really start until July. When possible it is best to check with local operators prior to your trip.

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large numbers of moray eels. In fact, some ichthyologists have claimed that El Bajo seamount, where Scalloped Hammerheads were first studied, is home to a greater number of moray eels than any other known dive site on earth. No one seems to know why but simply put, it seems like everywhere one looks there is a moray or two with a mouth-full of needle sharp teeth that photographers find irresistible.

Sometimes, as I age, I worry that places I once dived as wilderness have been turned into "trout farms,"

sites where divemasters know every fish and invertebrate on every reef. I suppose this is good thing in some places, but to me and everyone else who knew my Uncle Herb, the Cortez has always been an icon of wilderness, a place where not knowing exactly what you will see is a big part of the excitement and allure.

After my recent trip, I can't wait to tell Herb's family about my adventures and to reassure them that one of my uncle's favorite places is as wild and wonderful as ever. 🐠

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Contest open to photographers of all levels. The editors of *Skin Diver* will select five finalist images. These images will be posted on *Skin Diver* Online by August 1, 2001, and *Skin Diver* readers will help select the winner. Runner-up photos will be featured in the December 2001 issue.

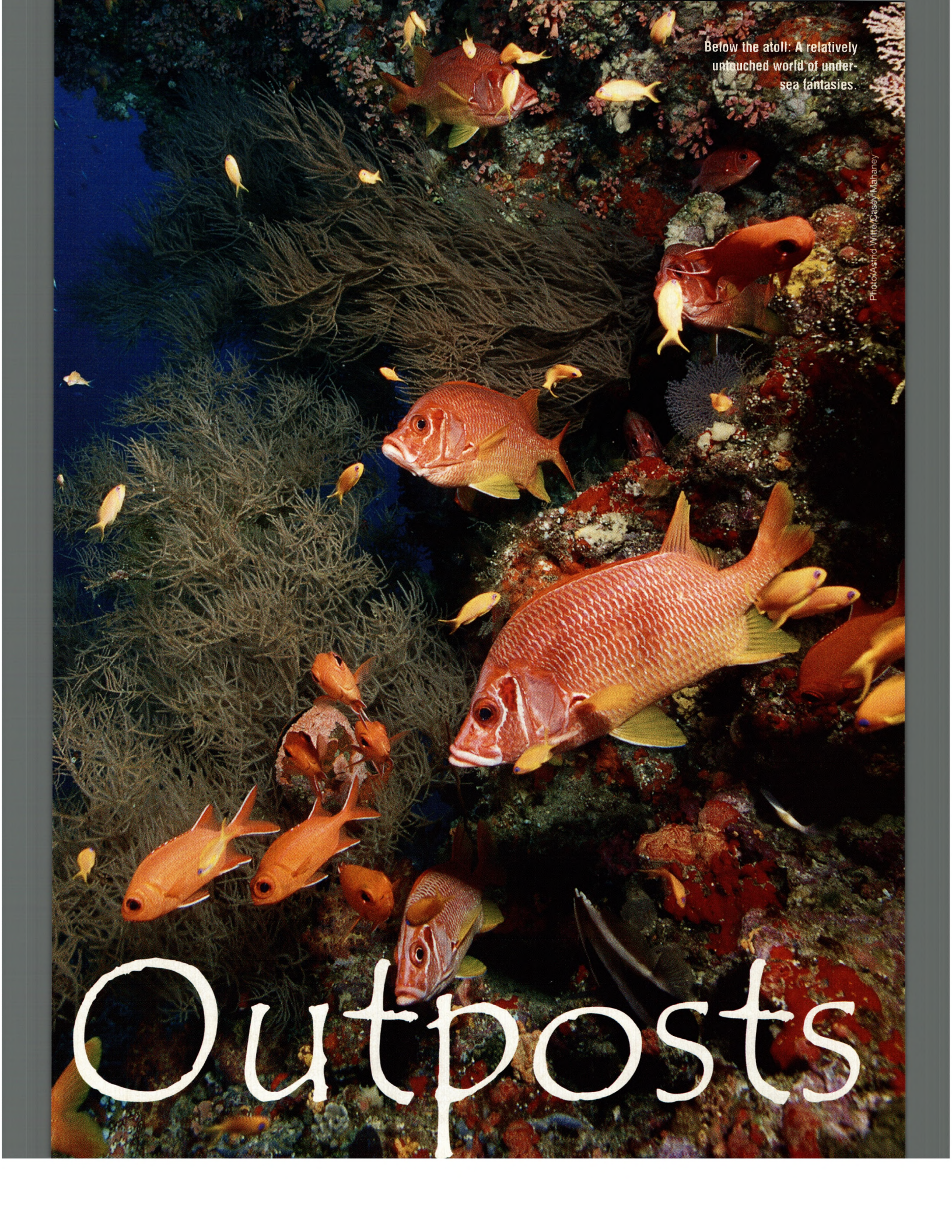


*For magazines mailed to subscribers only. Grand prize will include a first-time use payment of \$800. Each submission becomes property of *Skin Diver* magazine (photos will not be returned). *Skin Diver* is not responsible for lost or damaged submissions. Entries submitted without entry fee will be disqualified.

The Maldives sit like pristine jewels in the middle of the Indian Ocean, far from any other country or land mass. This is the wild west of diving—small oases of coral that stretch over a horizon of blue.

by Sara Shoemaker

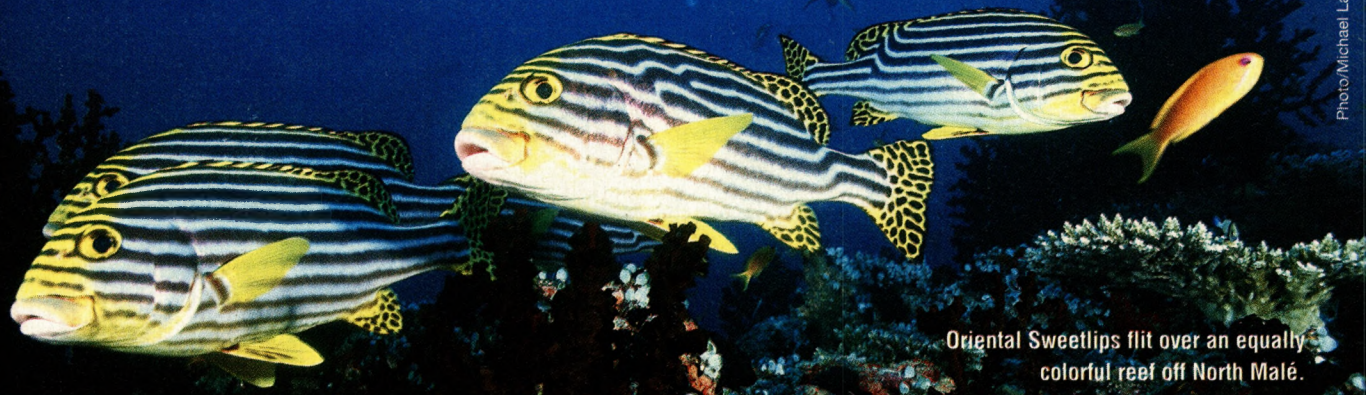
Emerald



Below the atoll: A relatively
untouched world of under-
sea fantasies.

Photo: David White/Casey Mahaney

Outposts



Photo/Michael Lawrence

Oriental Sweetlips flit over an equally colorful reef off North Malé.

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Diving here takes on three distinct forms, all of which revolve around the term *atoll*. Used frequently to describe island groups across the tropical Pacific, *atoll* is actually a Maldivian word describing the idyllic ring-like coral islands that make up the Maldives 1,000-island group. Covering 450 miles from north to south, the atolls range in size from tiny spits of sand to third largest in the world.



Photo/Michael Lawrence

A flounder plays hide and seek in the sand.

The first form of diving takes place in the *kandu*, or channels, between islands where the tide flows in and out of lagoons. These usually have strong current and are good places to see bigger creatures. Diving on the *maa kandu*, or the outer area of the atoll, features sloping reefs and greater depth. Or, divers can explore the *thila*, the areas inside the atoll lagoons, generally with much milder currents.

This system of atolls, reefs and

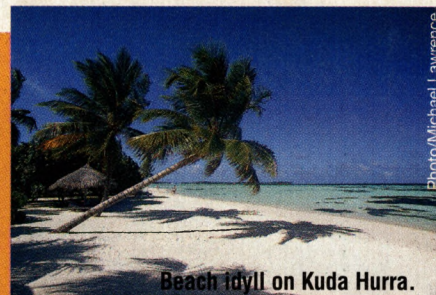
Plural Pleasures—Four Seasons

by Michael Lawrence

The single most impressive wealth of the Maldives is the number and sheer variety of fish life. After 20 years of diving and more than an abundance of experiences in my back pocket, this visit to the Maldives was my first opportunity to experience the wealth of the Indo-Pacific. My time wrapped in the warm arms of these islands made me rethink the simple possibilities offered by life.

In only 10 dives, I had the opportunity to interact with Manta Rays, Napoleon Wrasse, tuna and other gamefish, as well as a plethora of smaller fish and invertebrates, some even rare. And, on this visit, I was fortunate enough to be the guest of the Four Seasons Resort on Kuda Hurra, a grand example of tropical resort perfection.

Tree-shaded pathways wend their way among thatch-roofed bungalows. Small plunge pools shaded by palms create an idyllic setting for after-dive relaxation. Vine-draped, open air showers protected by high walls and shaded by poinciana trees allow for intimate, romantic moments in a private, natural setting. If this doesn't strum your heartstrings, nothing will.



Beach idyll on Kuda Hurra.

Photo/Michael Lawrence

channels is at the mercy of the tides, which make for strong currents and ample opportunities for drift dives. (Divers are advised to use a safety sausage and other surface signaling equipment at all times.) Visibility depends on tides and seasons and dif-

Banyan Tree Resort

The Banyan Tree Resort is a 30-minute boat ride from Malé. The Banyan Tree suites are closer together than at Soneva Fushi, as the island is smaller, but the architecture and design of the rooms provides ample privacy.

The Banyan Tree has a resident group of friendly stingrays, which show up a little before happy hour, around 4:00 PM. It was the first time I'd ever sat in the sandy surf zone and had rays swim up to visit me.

A Manta Ray enjoys a cleaning at a coral head off North Malé.

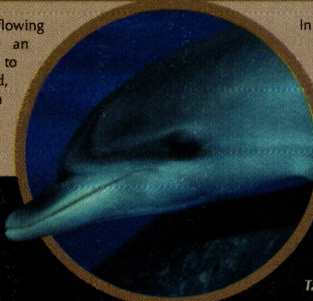


Photo/Michael Lawrence

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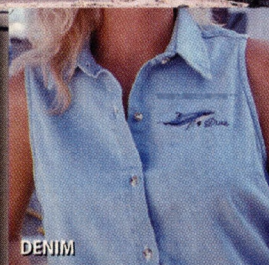
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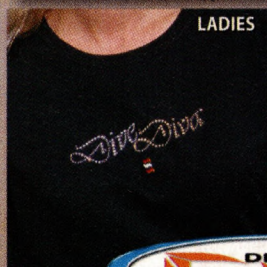
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Maldives

Scorpionfish

GETTING THERE

The Maldives are not the easiest place in the world to get to, which is again one of the reasons it is so unspoiled. From the West Coast of the U.S., fly to Singapore with the carrier of your choice, then Singapore Airlines to Malé, the capital of the Maldives. Via Europe or the Middle East there are a few more options. When you arrive into the Maldives by air you arrive on the airport island. There is an airport hotel scheduled to open to accommodate guests overnight en route to other atolls.

BEST TIME TO VISIT:

The climate of Maldives is warm year-round and determined by the monsoons. However, being on the equator, the monsoons are mild and not as defined as in neighboring countries. Of the two monsoons, the southwest monsoon from May to October brings some rain and wind. The northeast monsoon from November to April is the dry season with very little wind.

TOPSIDE CLIMATE:

Temperatures are constant throughout the year, usually 85°F.

WATER TEMPERATURE:

Ranges from 82 to 86°F.

EXCHANGE RATE:

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TIME DIFFERENCE:

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CONTACTS:

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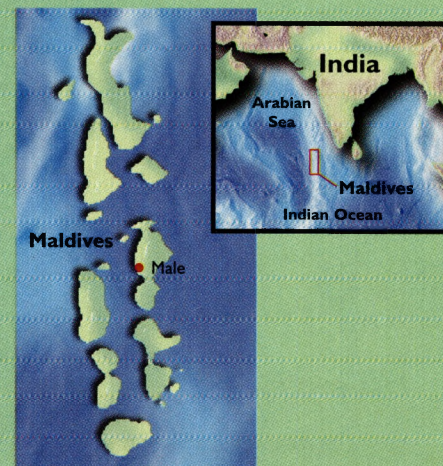


Photo: Michael Lawrence



Starfish in repose.

Soneva Fushi, Baa Atoll

If you are looking for diving in a relaxed setting of beauty and ultimate privacy, the island resort Soneva Fushi may be your kind of place. On the Baa Atoll, this resort offers a full-service spa, the option of private catering for two in a variety of locations (brunch on your own private beach, sunset dinner on a sandbar, picnic on a neighboring desert island), numerous watersports and, of course, plenty of diving.

ferences can be dramatic. The southwestern monsoon creates plankton blooms (typically on the eastern side of the atolls) that make the water a bit soupy from April to October, but with the advantage of pelagics coming in to feed on the nutrient-rich waters. Manta Rays and Whale Sharks are frequent visitors during this time. In November, the monsoon switches from southwestern to northeastern, the visibility improves, and the pelagics move to the western side of the atolls.

I saw sharks and turtles on almost every dive. And, the thilas just off the Baa Atoll are a favorite spot for feeding Manta Rays. There are also eagle rays and stingrays for additional visual excitement.

The turtle population is healthy, too. Incidentally, the fee for laundry service at the Soneva Resort goes to the protection of sea turtles.

The one thing to be sure of is that after making the effort to get to the Maldives, you should stay as long as possible. Time in paradise goes quickly. 🐠

Special thanks to Banyan Tree Resort, Four Seasons Resort, Singapore Airlines and Soneva Fushi for accommodations and diving.

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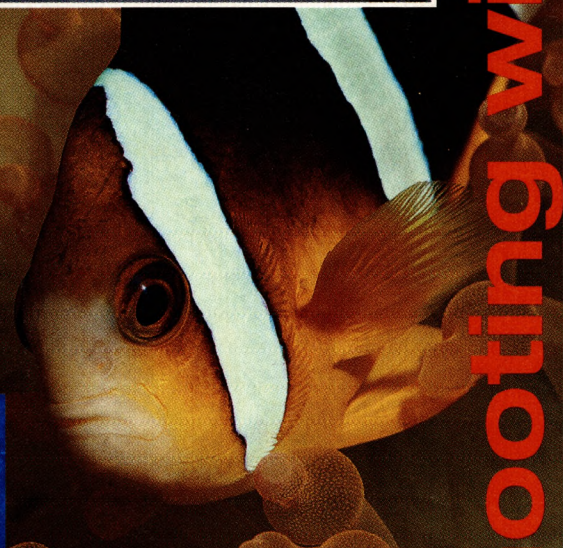


Weapons of Choice

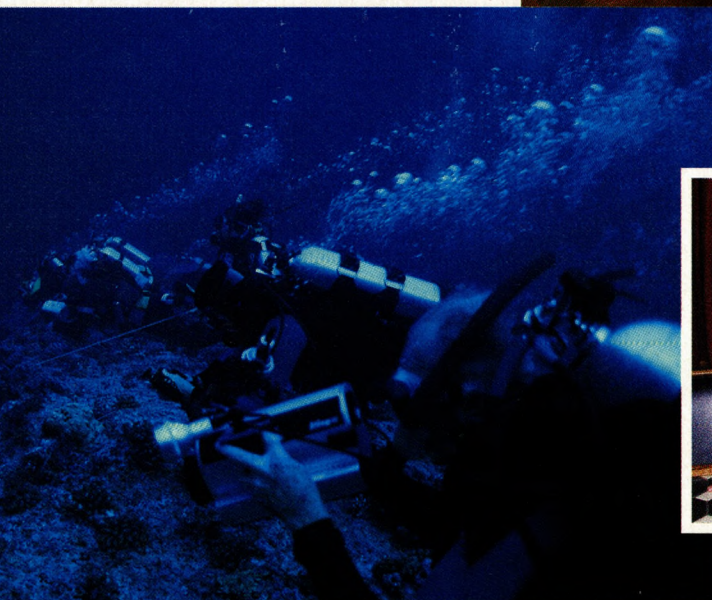
Apprentice Shooters



The Quarry



Target Practice



The Wizards at Work

THE MASSIVE, THREE-LEVEL CAMERA TABLE SITS EMPTY. THE dive deck is momentarily quiet. A rare moment of silence and contemplation before the guests begin to arrive.

Soon the dive table is crowded with underwater cameras—both still and video. Some of the divers fiddle with

their equipment, others mingle and chat, anxious to weigh anchor and begin the adventure—and the learning. These divers have come halfway around the world to the undersea nirvana of Palau for an underwater photo course. In the middle of the group, Stan Waterman, a

renowned photographer/videographer who will be teaching alongside me, has already started telling stories.

Students come with a variety of experience levels. Some have just purchased their equipment and want to get a good grasp on the basics. Others arrive expecting to hone their skills with a few secrets from the pros.

Live-aboards, such as the *Palau Aggressor*, are ideal floating classrooms for an underwater photography course. Your stateroom, dining room, classroom, camera table, light boxes and television are just minutes away from the dive site. Using the schedule of a recent underwater still and video course taught by Stan Waterman and myself, let me tell you what you can expect.

School begins before the first dive of the morning, with brief overviews and

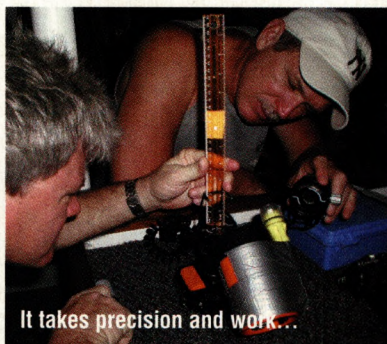
a short (12 to 17 minute) slide show, followed by discussions on strobes, lenses, metering, close-ups, shooting divers and underwater photo composition. After the questions are answered, the divers hit the water to practice.

Later in the day, the instruction becomes more personal. Stan and I work with individuals and small groups with different interests, while others

plays one or more of his video productions. Then, he explains the story-building techniques that he uses, such as introductions, transitions, endings and much more. His instruction is humorous and sugar-coated.

For the diving, the aspiring U/W photographers board the 32-foot covered skiff at deck level. The ride to the dive site is usually less than 10 minutes. Two or three local divemasters help students find subjects they are interested in capturing. Some DMs specialize in finding the big stuff—rays, sharks and pelagic fish. Others are the “eagle eyes” who can always find the tiny critters.

Throughout the week, Stan and I observe the students and help correct errors on the



use the tables to work on their equipment, or dub and edit videos at the computer station in the forward lounge.

When Stan is aboard, the evenings are special. A master entertainer, Stan

spot—underwater.

By the end of the week, the budding U/W photographers have usually blossomed in some way. And, more


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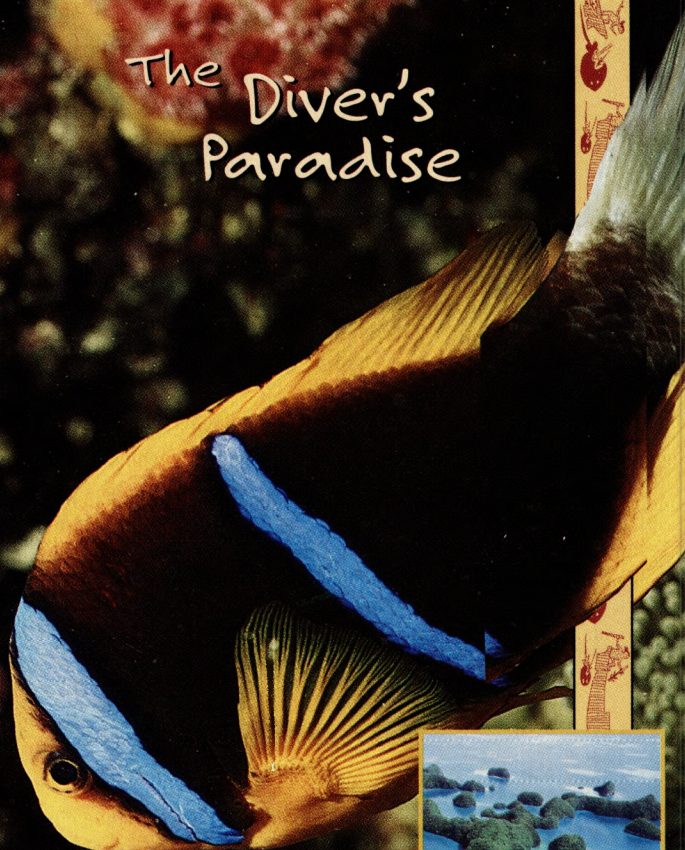
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Palau

The Diver's Paradise



Teri Bergman, a new videographer, said she had some concerns that the level of the program was beyond her abilities. She planned to listen and absorb as much as she could.

"Jim and Stan were able to help each student at their level, often one-on-one," said Teri, who was able to spend time with both of them. Teri also gained practical advice from some of the advanced students taking the course. "Looking back at my experience in the course, I believe I learned more in that week than I would have in years on my own."

Stuart Bergman, a more advanced photographer, echoed Teri's remarks, "This course has exceeded my expectations. I use my underwater photos to adorn my medical office because the pictures help soothe the anxieties of patients at the start of their visit."

Peter Turino added, "Jim reminded us that film is the least expensive part of the trip and pushed us to shoot a role on every dive. They try to reach the artist in each of us. They inspired us to become photographers, which is much more than simply diving with a camera."

What the divers had to say:

importantly, the groups often develop close friendships with both the instructors and other students that extend beyond the end of the trip. I even see students on other charters, traveling and refining their skills with their newfound shutter-buddies.

2001 Course Schedule

May 12-19, *Fiji Aggressor*
 Jun 16-26, *Red Sea*
 July 14-21, *Cayman Aggressor*
 Sep 15-22, *Yap on Palau Aggressor*
 Sep 23-30, *Truk Aggressor*
 Oct 27-Nov 3, *Cayman Aggressor*
 (See Website for 2002 schedule.)

While this article focuses on a specific course with two specific instructors on a specific vessel, other quality live-aboard photo/video courses do exist—aboard Aggressors and other vessels.

For more information about courses featuring Stan and/or Jim, go to www.aggressors.com, and click on celebrity charters.

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If you've ever dreamed of seeing one of your photos on the cover of Skin Diver, now is your chance to see it happen.

To enter, submit each photograph with an entry fee of \$5 (check or money order). Multiple entries will be accepted. Each image submitted must be accompanied with an entry fee. Vertical, 35mm slides or medium format transparencies are preferred.
DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS JULY 15, 2001.

Contest open to photographers of all levels. The editors of Skin Diver will select five finalist images. These images will be posted on Skin Diver Online by August 1, 2001, and Skin Diver readers will help select the winner. Runner-up photos will be featured in the December 2001 issue.

*For magazines mailed to subscribers only. Grand prize will include a first time use payment of \$900. Each submission becomes property of Skin Diver magazine (photos will not be returned). Skin Diver is not responsible for lost or damaged submissions. Entries submitted without entry fee will be disqualified.

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Photos/Al Hornsby

The first hotel on Grand Cayman, the Seaview was built in 1952. Although recently refurbished and upgraded, it still retains its signature charm and hominess.

A Pleasant Surprise

by Jim Walker



Hardcore Cayman Maskress divers with their treasure hunt prizes.

Photo/Al Hornsby



A ladder provides access for free shore diving.

Photo/Al Hornsby

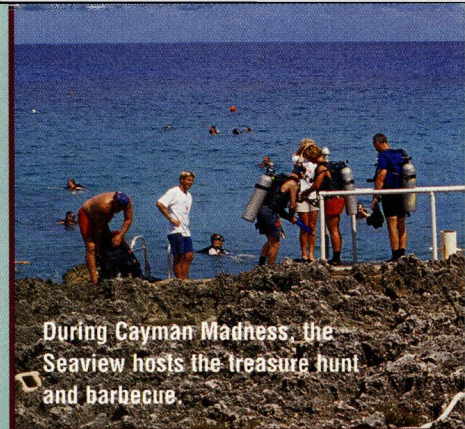
Grand Cayman's Seaview Hotel is the kind of pleasant surprise that sneaks up on you, casting its warm spell in spite of all your pre-set agendas and work-a-day tension. I know, firsthand. You see, I had come to Grand Cayman for the first time—alone, to interview some people, attend some events, learn as much as possible for future stories, and, maybe, get in a little diving. Someone else had set me up at the Seaview. I didn't really care where I stayed. I had things to do, places to go and people to meet. I needed an attitude adjustment.

When I stepped out on the verandah to the sounds of birds and the soft surge of the nearby ocean, my attitude began to bend, even to soften almost immediately. As a diver, I found comfort in the sight of wetsuits hanging from the eaves. It turned out that I was one of the few at the hotel who wasn't part of a Cayman Madness group from Texas. And, those people had come to DIVE!

In fact, earlier in the morning, some of the Texans were already

dropping into the turquoise ocean from the dock; some were even climbing up one of two exit ladders, having completed a dive while I slept. None of them had wasted valuable dive time sleeping in.

Shore diving is easy, with free, unlimited use of tanks, weights and weight belts, and plenty of guidance on how to make your dives and what you'll see from the staff at the full-service dive shop onsite. Their boat dives also go to the best Grand



During Cayman Madness, the Seaview hosts the treasure hunt and barbecue.

Cayman sites. The shop has a full selection of gear for purchase or rent, including DPVs. Gear rinse, dive



ISLAND DREAMS TRAVEL



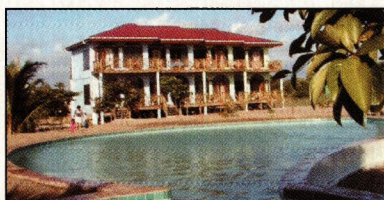
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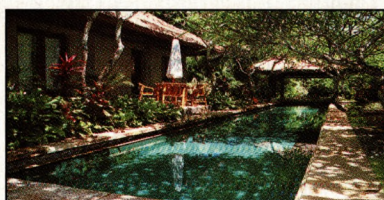
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Seaview Facts

The Seaview Hotel and Dive Resort was built in 1952. It was the first hotel on the island, and got its heart and soul when this was still a sleepy little corner of the world. The hotel is now leased and operated by Ron Kipp of Bob Soto's Diving. The facilities have recently undergone a major refurbishment, but the atmosphere remains relaxed. And, though many parts of Grand Cayman have stepped up the pace dramatically in recent years, the Seaview remains the kind of place where the tropical island atmosphere of bygone days seeps into your psyche despite your best efforts to the contrary.

The hotel is one half-mile south of, and an easy walk away from, all the activities of George Town. The setting is a well-kept residential neighborhood, with the hotel blending right in and occupying a couple acres on the ocean side of the road. In fact, arriving after dark, I drove right by it. Of course, I was still getting used to driving on the left and was a little preoccupied.

From the outside, the facilities resemble someone's home. The 15 modest, yet comfortable rooms are air-conditioned and have one



lockers and nitrox service is available, and the shop staff offers a wide range of personalized instruction, from



General manager Will Kelly, hotel operator Ron Kipp (of Out Soto's Diving) and restaurant operator Mike Flowers.

double or two twin beds, a bedside table and lamp, ceiling fans, private bathrooms, clock radios and phones. If you need a TV fix, all you have to do is step over to the dining room or bar.

For après dive time, there is a large saltwater pool, two exterior, freshwater showers for rinsing off after a dive or swim, lots of shaded or sunny lounging space and the deck furniture to do it in. And one of the Seaview's highlights is the Naked Fish Restaurant, run by the owners of Cayman's famous Lone Star Bar and Grill. The restaurant offers a varied selection of delicious edibles, from specialty fish dishes to burgers and most things in between.

For more information, call (888) 718-7400, or the Seaview Hotel at (345) 945-0558. You can also send e-mails to seadive@candw.ky.

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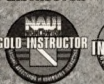
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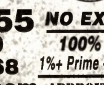
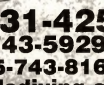
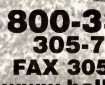
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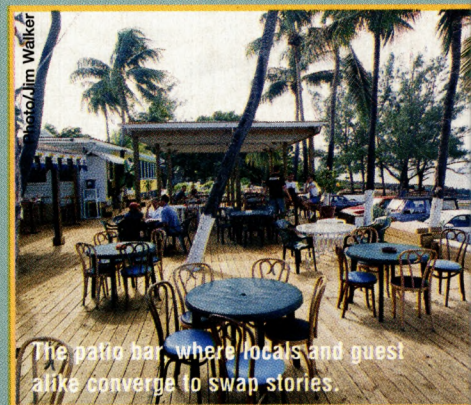


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The hotel's patio bar is popular among locals and guests alike and is the hub of non-diving activities. One of my favorite events occurs on Canadian Thanksgiving when patrons bowl with frozen turkeys! It's also where I was finally cornered by the Texans, who told me, in no uncertain terms, that I was going night diving. It was the turning point



The patio bar, where locals and guest alike converge to swap stories.

of my trip. After that, my agenda began to take a back seat to relaxing and enjoying myself.

As the days went by, the Texas divers were winding down, too. They had made loads of dives. I think top score for the week was 30-plus, and some of them were actually taking a pass now and then. I tried teasing them, but, well, they would just sort of look at me with satisfied smiles.

During Cayman Madness weeks, the Seaview is the site of the underwater treasure hunt and barbecue. Though I was more paparazzi than participant at this event, it was a perfect way for all of us to finish the week's fun. A great moment occurred when the Texans made their divemasters go searching for their tips in the pool, blindfolded and tied together.

Sure, you can go to Grand Cayman and have a fabulous time without stepping far outside your fast-paced, everyday reality. Some people enjoy that. I thought I would. But, in the end, I experienced the best of Cayman now, mixed with a healthy helping of how it used to be. It wasn't what I came for. But, thank goodness, it's what I got.

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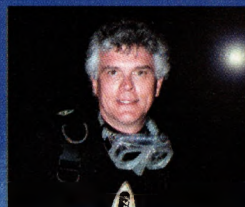
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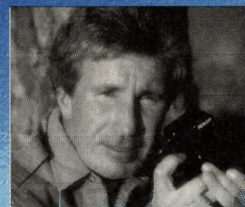
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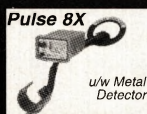
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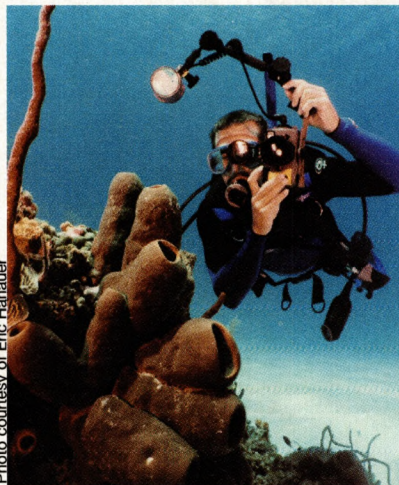


Photo courtesy of Eric Hanauer

ter caves, ledges and dropoffs that
bottom out at 200 feet.

The Roatan Underwater Photo
and Video Championship is draw-
ing closer. On August 25, five world-
famous underwater photographers
will host both novice and advanced
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sen mentor will guide you through
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topside on the boat. Other topside
photo opportunities will include
sessions at the Roatan Bird Park,
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local, tropical beaches. Winners of
the championship will be published
in *Skin Diver* magazine.

The following talented photogra-
phers and long-time *Skin Diver* con-
tributors will be leading classes and
expeditions at the following locations:

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• **Jim Church**, world-renowned photographer, teacher and writer, whose latest works include, *Jim Church's Essential Guide to Underwater Video*, *Jim Church's Essential Guide to Nikonos Systems* and *Jim Church's Essential Guide to Photo Composition*, will host events on the Bay Islands Aggressor.

• **Rick Frehsee**, an award-winning expedition photographer, cave specialist and once-aquonaut (saturation diver) will share his photographic secrets at the Coco View Resort.

• **Rick Sammon**, guest host of ESPN *Photo Safari* and author of *Seven Underwater Wonders of the World*, will join shooters at the Bay Islands Beach Resort.

• **Steve Simonsen**, noted author and photographer whose clients include the Discovery Channel, Kodak and Carnival Cruises, will be hosting events and classes at Fantasy Island Beach Resort.

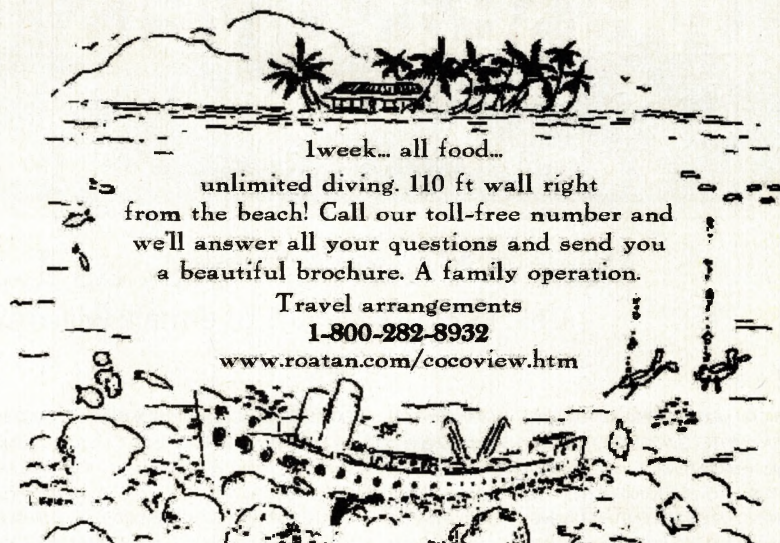
• **Marty Snyderman**, producer of *The Secret World of Sharks and Rays* and *Skin Diver's* regular photo columnist ("Ask The Pro"), is also contributing cinematographer for films such as *Free Willy* and *Jewels of the Caribbean*. He will conduct classes from Anthony's Key Resort.

These select, professional photographers will bring in-depth knowledge of all aspects of photography, from film selection to photo processing. Each plans to share educational slide shows and their secrets on catching the island's natural beauty of film. Free demos of dive gear, lights and camera equipment from sponsors will also be offered.

Each education-packed day will be topped off with seminars, happy hours, slide shows of each photographer's work and an awards presentation on the evening of August 31.

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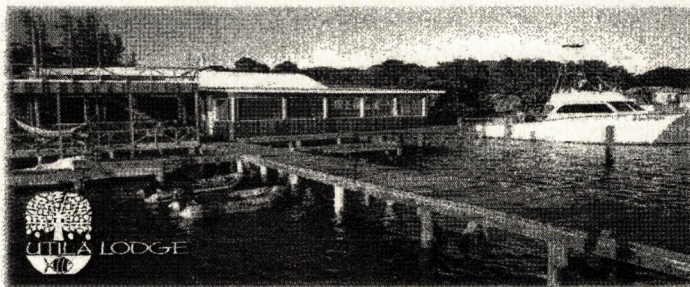
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The Black Brotula

BY NED AND ANNA DeLOACH WITH PAUL HUMANN

FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS I HAVE BEEN zealously stalking a cryptic fish known as a Black Brotula, across the waters of Mexico, Florida, the Bahamas and the Caribbean. And last July, I finally tracked my prize down in a 60-foot sponge-encrusted ledge off the tip of Tobago in the hinterland of the Caribbean—the last dive site east before Africa. After a thousand unsuccessful searches in a thousand coral caves, my light beam finally illuminated the elusive brotula, hovering in the shadows like a black ghost held aloft by a skirt of gracefully

WHERE TO FIND THEM

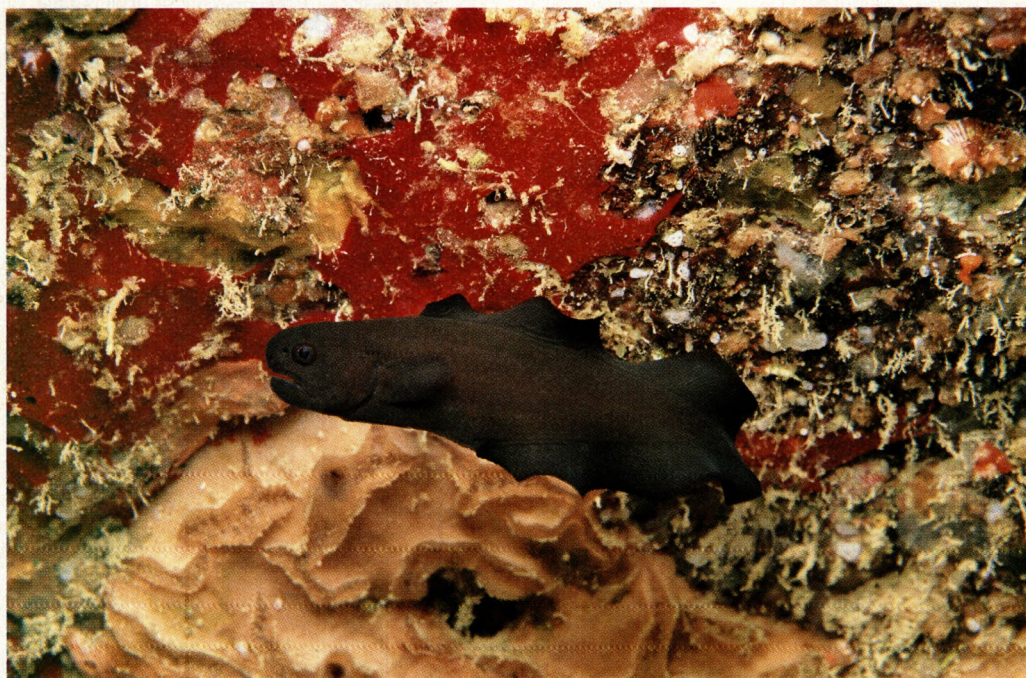
Hiding in dark places in the waters off Mexico, Florida, the Bahamas and the Caribbean.

because it is such an odd little fish from an odd fish family. There are 170 species worldwide in the family Bythitidae. All have a similar appearance: blunt heads, tapering torsos and medial fins encircling the body. But the similarities end there. Brotulas vary from three inches to three feet in length and occupy diverse habitats from reefs to freshwater caves.

However, most species live deep. As a matter of fact, the deepest collected fish ever recorded is a brotula taken 4.34 miles down. It appears that the family has a penchant for dark places. Another unique characteristic is that the Black Brotula and a few other family members are the only bony fish in the Caribbean known to bear live young.

The Caribbean's small contingent of shallow-water brotulas lives hidden deep inside the reefs' unseen recesses where they dine on a variety of small crustaceans. Only the Black Brotula is known to venture into sun-lit openings. The species has also been documented as a cleaner (an organism that makes a living picking parasitic

crustaceans off fishes). Facts like these make me wax Darwinian: It might just be that over time, the promise of an easy meal of parasites coaxed the Black Brotula's ancestors just far enough out of the dark and into the shadows for the species to become the consummate challenge for today's fish watchers. 🐟



An elusive Black Brotula ventures out from the safety of darkness, possibly for a quick meal.

undulating fins. Now admittedly, my quarry isn't exactly a 30-pound Cobia fit for a banquet table, but the thrill of my hunt for the Black Brotula (*Stygnobrotula latebricola*) is every bit as seductive.

Why and how the brotula struck my fancy is only speculative. Possibly

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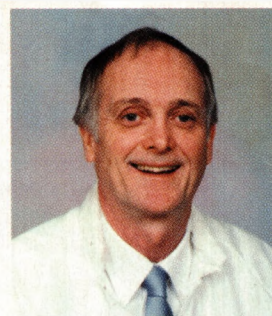
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The General Slocum

BY ELLSWORTH BOYD



RENOWNED AUTHOR AND EXPLORER Clive Cussler has done it again. His National Underwater and Marine Agency team, led by marine surveyor Ralph Wilbanks, discovered the remains of the *General Slocum*, an excursion steamer that claimed 1,021 lives when it sank in New York's East River in 1904.

The stately paddle-wheeler caught fire when a cookstove exploded during a 30-minute cruise from New York's Lower East Side to North Brother Island. Hundreds of passengers, most of them families on a picnic outing sponsored by St. Mark's German Lutheran Church, leapt overboard as the captain steered toward the island.

Cussler says the ship is buried beneath four feet of silt and was identified by recording its dimensions and discovering a cargo of coal and Coca-Cola.

Details of the mishap are recorded in *Lost Voyages: Two Centuries of Shipwrecks in the Approaches to New York* by Brad Sheard.

BILL HUGHES OF STATE COLLEGE, Pennsylvania, writes that he and his dive buddies will resume their search for the U.S. Coast Guard cutter, *Bedlow*, sunk off North Carolina's Outer Banks during a hurricane in 1944.

Although they have found two old fishing trawlers, the *Bedlow* remains

wash over them in all kinds of seas.

When the bow of the ship plowed in to the sea in bad weather, deckhands had to keep tightening the tarps on the hatches. As they worked the bindings, sloshing through a constant flow of water, crews called McDougall-designed vessels "pig boats."

JIM CLARK OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA, would like to identify a shipwreck in Scorpion Anchorage, Santa Cruz, one of Santa Barbara's Channel Islands.

From Jim's description, it sounds like the *Peacock*, a 140-foot-long, World War II minesweeper that sank in 1979. Decommissioned in 1955, she was converted

into a freighter/passenger ship that sailed around the Caribbean as well as California. Divers descend 50 to 70 feet to visit its remains, which are covered with barnacles, anemones and tunicates, attracting Sheepshead, Calico Bass and baitfish.

LT. DAVE SNELL, USN, OF AUGUSTA, Georgia, is interested in tracing the SS *Quaker City*, a ship on which his great uncle died when it was torpedoed by a German U-boat in the Caribbean in 1942.

The *Quaker City* is listed as a U-boat victim in *Axis Submarine Successes, 1939-1945* by Jurgen Rowher. Captain Hartenstein commanded the *U-156* on May 18, 1942, when his torpedoes tore into the *Quaker City*. The location of the disaster, near the island of Barbados, is listed as: 14.55N/51.40W. 🚢

Send your wreck questions to Ellsworth Boyd, 1120 Bernoudy Rd., White Hall, MD 21161. Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for a personal reply. Ellsworth can also be e-mailed at: aced@gateway.net.

The paddle-wheel steamer *General Slocum* sank in New York's East River in 1904 with a loss of 1,021 lives.



Scores of men, women and children were drowned or crushed by the steamer's churning paddle-wheels in one of America's worst marine disasters. Only 300 people escaped as the 264-foot-long vessel sank off Hunt's Point on the East River.

Merritt, Chapman and Scott Wrecking Company salvaged the burned out hull and towed it to a shipyard where it was converted to a coal barge. The barge, christened the *Maryland*, was lost in a squall eight years later off Atlantic City, New Jersey.

elusive. Hughes conducted extensive research over the winter, hoping it will help in the discovery of the lost cutter this summer.

PETE NAWROCKY, VIA THE INTERNET, replies to a reader's question about "pig boats" on the Great Lakes.

Pete says Dwight Boyer's book, *Great Stories of the Great Lakes* (Dodd, Mead and Company, NY, 1966), refers to "pig boats" as those designed by ship-builder Alexander McDougall. The decks were sloped, allowing water to

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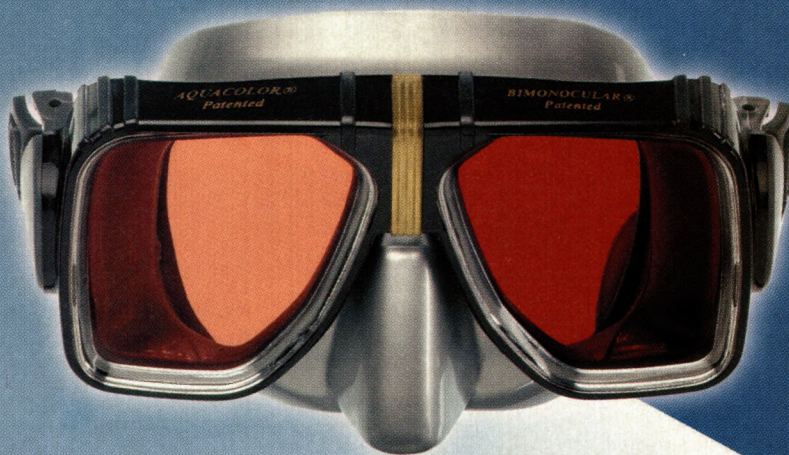
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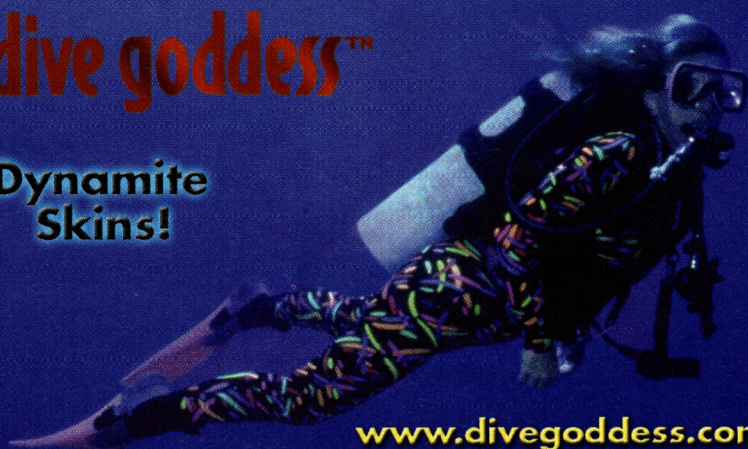
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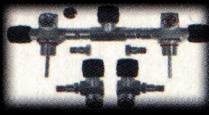
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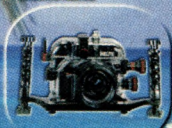
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- Indo-Pacific Coral Reef Guide
- Lost Voyages
- (2 Centuries Of Shipwreck)
- New England Legacy
- Of Shipwrecks
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M40, 8000, 6000,	
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SNORKELS

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Full Foot	

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SNORKEL

Evac Flex	Mojave Dry
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Gauge Reader Mask	

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Look Split Lens	
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Hawaii 3	Hawaii 4
Pulse	

FINS

Blades	Blades FP
Compro	

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Flex Impulse 2	

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Dry Snorkel 2000	
Equalizer Z2	
Z4	
Equalizer Pro Vision	
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Scenic	
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SNORKELS

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Quantum w/Purge	
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Integra 4 Window QL	
Integra DL	Tri Vista
Pursuit SL	Via
Pursuit DL	Ultra II

FINS

Turboblex 5.P	Pursuit
Integra Fin	

SNORKELS

Integra (II) Flex Dry	
Integra (II)	

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Full Face Mask w/Nira Reg	
Full Face Mask	

MARES MASKS

ESA 6 Window Mask	
Vedra Split Lens	
Tempra Single Lens	
Seta Mask Split Lens	
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FINS

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Plana Avanti X3	
Avanti HP Full Foot	
Avanti Quattro	
Gorilla	

CRESSI-SUB MASKS

Focus	Sky
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SNORKEL

Alpha Flex	
Frog	Space Frog
F/F Free Frog	

TUSA

- Imprex Mask
- Imprex II Snorkel
- Imprex Fins

GENESIS

- Genesis Mask
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TEC 600	Spare Bulbs
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Power Pro R	Shockwave
Shockwave R	

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SL-6	Spare Bulbs
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SLD-8	SLD-8R

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Super C-Lite H	Sata Lite Coil
Sata Lite	RCD Light H R
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Close Up Lens	
Pro Color Correction Filter	
Strobe Lite	
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Sea&Sea



Motor Marine II/EX



MX-10 w/YS40A Strobe

Motor Marine II-EX Outfit with YS-60 Flash

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Macro Lens 3T

20mm Wide Conversion Lens

16mm Wide Conversion Lens

Optical Viewfinder

Optical Viewfinder HP

20mm Lens f/MX-10

Macro Lens f/MX-10

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SEA & SEA MX10 Body

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Substrobe, Macro Kit, Bag

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Aquashot-3e Housing

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w/Endeavor10, Macro Kit, Travel Bag

w/Endeavor10, Substrobe, Macro Kit, Travel Bag

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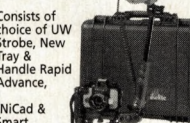
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#1300 - (9.5 x7.5x7")	-	-	#1600 - (22x17x8")	-	-
#1400 - (12.3 x9.5x5.3")	-	-	#1650 - (28x18x10.5")	-	-
#1450 - (15 x10.5x6")	-	-	#1700 - (36x13.5x5")	-	-
#1500 - (18 x11.7x6.5")	-	-	#1750 - (50x13.5x5")	-	-
#1520 - (18 x13x6.75")	-	-			

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w/35/2.5	
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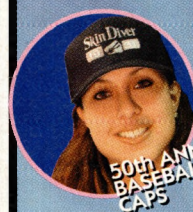
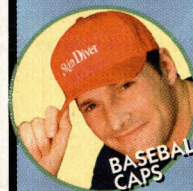
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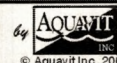


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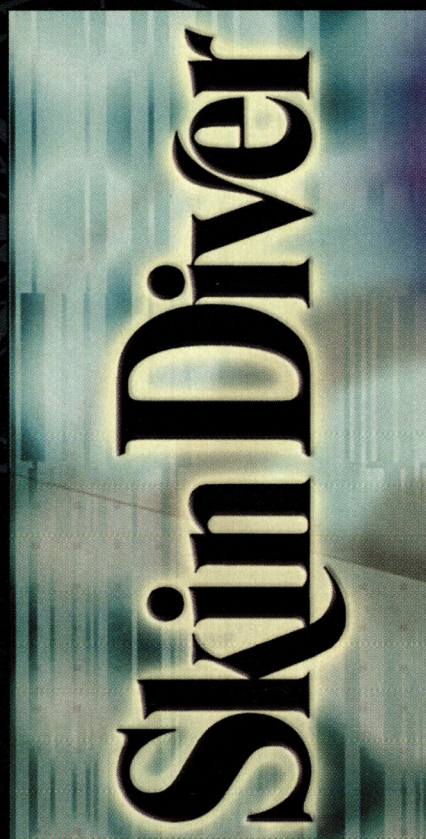
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Taming the Buoyancy Beast

BY KEN KURTIS

GOOD BUOYANCY CONTROL IS AN essential skill to not only becoming a good diver, but becoming a more comfortable diver as well. Learning to control your buoyancy takes practice. Good buoyancy control involves three inter-related aspects of diving, and when you control each of them, you're well on your way to mastering the art of buoyancy.

all of your dive gear, inflate your BC and float at the surface. With your regulator in your mouth, take and hold a full breath of air, then empty all of the air from your BC. If properly weighted, you should float at eye level. To begin a descent, all you have to do is exhale. Also remember that if you are doing this check with a full aluminum scuba

set the compression (loss of buoyancy) to your wetsuit. The thickness of your wetsuit will also affect the compression and your buoyancy.


The two biggest things to remember when using your BC are (1) make small adjustments, and (2) remember that there's a lag time between adding or releasing air and actually feeling the effect. One of the biggest problems divers with bad buoyancy have is that they over-adjust the BC, either adding too much air and starting an ascent, or dumping too much air and plummeting to the bottom.

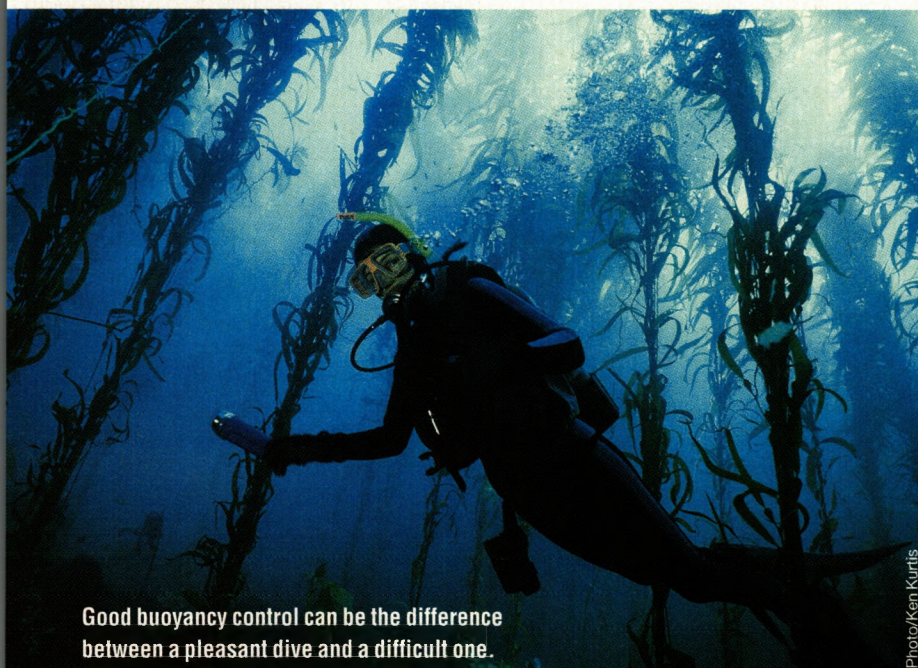
Step 3: Fine Tune With Your Lungs

Proper weighting and the amount of air in your BC should allow you to get your buoyancy pretty close to neutral. The amount of air you keep in your lungs allows you to "fine tune" everything. Think of your lungs as an internal BC. Fill them up with air, and you'll start to rise. Empty them of air and you'll sink. (The buoyancy difference between a full and empty lung, depending on your body size, can be anywhere from five to 10 pounds.)

Do you want to go over a small rise? Just inhale a little deeper. Want to sink to look at something under a ledge? Exhale fully. Did you put too much air in the BC? Exhale while you vent air out of the BC. Did you dump too much air out of the BC? Inhale fully to help arrest your descent while you add air to the BC.

Putting It All Together

Mastering buoyancy control will improve your air consumption (less drag), make you less tired (by not working as hard) and allow you to enjoy diving to the fullest. And when you do it right, you'll feel in total control of your body positioning in the water. It's truly an exhilarating feeling. 



Good buoyancy control can be the difference between a pleasant dive and a difficult one.

Photo/Ken Kurtis

Step 1: Proper Weighting

You should be able to get this fairly accurate, certainly within a pound or two. To determine your proper weight, you first need to know what kind of thermal protection you'll be wearing. If you dive in colder waters where a 7 mm wetsuit is needed, start with about 10 percent of your body weight. If you dive in waters requiring a 3 mm wetsuit, try about 5 percent. And if you're diving in a lycra skin (which has no buoyancy), you may not need any weight.

To see if you are properly weighted requires getting in the water. Wearing

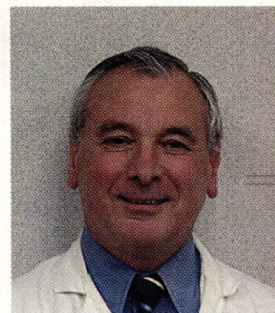
cylinder, to add several pounds (perhaps five) of weight before diving. This will compensate for the positive buoyancy characteristics of aluminum cylinders when empty and keep you from being too buoyant at the end of your dive.

Step 2: Using the BC

Once you've got your weight set, you're ready to dive. This is where the BC comes into play as it allows you to fine tune your buoyancy. In theory, if you start out properly weighted, you're adding just enough air to the BC to off-

Breathing Difficulty While Diving

BY FRED BOVE, M.D., PH.D.



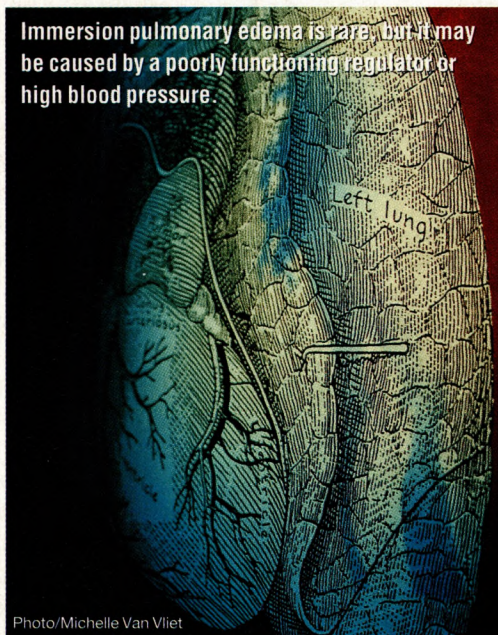
FOR THE PAST 10 YEARS OR SO WE HAVE been aware of an interesting and worrisome problem that occurs in some divers while they are underwater. The problem is the rapid development of severe shortness of breath caused by fluid leaking from the bloodstream into the air spaces in the lungs, and impairing the flow of oxygen into the blood. In medicine we call this pulmonary edema. It is somewhat akin to drowning, but the fluid comes from the body and not from the outside environment. A letter from a diver describes the sensation:

"...I went down to the bottom, knelt in the sand and remained still so as not to disturb the fish. I was in about 25 to 30 feet of water for about 10 minutes or so when I started coughing into my regulator. I noticed my breathing was a little fast for someone who was inactive. Over the next five minutes or so, my coughing became more and more frequent. I started to become a little concerned and signaled to my buddy that I was going up. By the time I surfaced I was very short of breath. I swam to the stern of the boat and just hung on to the ladder. I kept coughing and coughing and coughing. ...I kept coughing up a lot of secretions. I was having coughing fits. By the time we got back to the dock, my coughing slowed up. The shortness of breath cleared up after I was inactive and sitting for a few minutes. It was about five or six hours before I felt totally normal. If I had to put a label on what I was experiencing, it would be that of pulmonary edema. This episode was the third and worst yet..."

This problem was described in 1990 at a scientific meeting of diving medi-

cal physicians. The syndrome occurred in divers who were wearing wetsuits in cold water. In the first report they were all over 50 years old, and it was thought that these individuals had heart problems that occurred for the first time while diving. However, subsequent reports were published that included younger divers in warm water with no medical history of any serious disease. Some of these individ-

Immersion pulmonary edema is rare, but it may be caused by a poorly functioning regulator or high blood pressure.



Photo/Michelle Van Vliet

uals were taken to hospitals and were found to have fluid scattered throughout the air spaces of the lungs and inadequate oxygen in the blood.

This problem, called pulmonary edema, usually occurs because the heart is injured or damaged, or because a process has occurred in the lung to allow fluid to leak from the bloodstream and fill the air spaces with plasma. The most serious and discomforting symptom is the rapid onset of severe shortness of breath and coughing while diving. The diver describes this well in

the letter, which is a typical description.

Although immersion pulmonary edema is rare, it is certainly not trivial and can cause significant problems with divers. The mechanism for it is not well-understood, but some precautions are worth stating:

- Be sure your regulator is breathing normally. If there is resistance to inspiration, have the regulator checked and adjusted. A malfunctioning regulator that does not supply adequate air will cause negative pressure breathing and may induce pulmonary edema.

- Don't dive if you have high blood pressure. Be sure your blood pressure is treated and normal before diving.

- Be careful with excess fluid intake. There have been a few documented instances when divers were given large amounts of fluid just prior to diving and developed immersion pulmonary edema.

- If you have a heart problem, be sure you discuss diving with your physician and avoid diving unless your heart problem is stable and well controlled with medication. Most divers who experience immersion pulmonary edema are found to have normal hearts.

Although the cause for immersion pulmonary edema is unknown, these precautions can provide some protection. If you develop severe shortness of breath underwater, ascend at a normal rate to avoid lung overpressure. If your symptoms persist on the surface, breathe 100 percent oxygen if it is available. Consult your physician to be certain that your health is normal before returning to diving. 🐟

You can find more information on diving medicine at www.scubamed.com.

time capsules

By Tiffany H. Carey

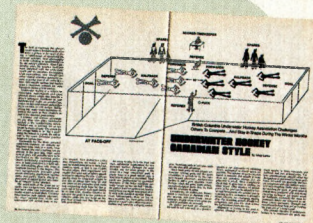
Each month *Skin Diver* looks back through its pages in search of those little nuggets of yesteryear—old equipment, trends of the time, new discoveries—that echo the times and may surprise or shock us. It's good to know your roots and how discoveries of old have helped shape diving today.

1978

Underwater Hockey—Canadian Style



If there's one thing Canadians are serious about, it's hockey. And in the January 1978 issue, Andy Lamb gives a play-by-play on scuba divers' up-and-coming winter sport, underwater hockey. But what begins as an introduction to the sport, which improves "proper fin kicking and correct surface diving," ends in a bold-faced challenge. Lamb proclaims that "...the British Columbian team has dominated the Canadian National Championships.... An unabashed challenge is issued to any team that would dispute this claim." Lamb goes on to say, "Those interested in questioning the Canadian team's superiority should contact...." Lamb includes two measurement-precise diagrams and player position requirements to tutor any team interested in a face-off. It is not known if Lamb's cheeky dare was ever accepted, but the Underwater World Championships will be held in Calgary in 2002. 🐟



1963

Getting the "Bug"

And we're not talking about the flu. We're talking about a record-breaking, 20-pound lobster caught in Belmar, New Jersey. Charlie Stratton managed to spot a large lobster crawling into a hold under the wreck of the *Delaware*, a site known for "bugs." "With bare hands, he [Charlie] reached into the hole and fought with the lobster to free him from the wreck," Russ Govet writes in the January 1963 issue. As the quick-handed Charlie broke to the surface and yelled for his dive buddy, the lobster flipped and flopped, trying to get a grip on its hunter. But Charlie prevailed. The prized bug weighed in at "19 pounds, 14 ounces," and like a proud pop, Charlie "strutted up and down the dock, passing out cigars and proudly announcing, 'It's a boy.'" 🐟



1955

Surfboard Construction



Just as diving has come a long way, so has surfing. Bev Morgan wrote about the evolving stages of the surfboard in April, 1955. Originally, boards were constructed of heavy balsa wood and weighed up to 160 pounds. During the '30s, a hollow surfboard was created, bringing the weight down to 60 pounds. But as Morgan describes, progression with plastics boomed during the war, and boards were soon being constructed of foam plastic and plywood. The weight lightened to 40 pounds. "Each board is built to the individual's specifications, and the price ranges from \$65 to \$95," wrote Morgan. Plastics were making waves in the surfing industry, and Morgan seemed to know it, as he concluded his article with a knowing question: "Will the all-plastic board replace the balsa board? Time will tell." Not only can boards now be made in all-plastic, but a custom-built board can run a surfer a cool \$400. 🐟



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Heavy Breathing

BY COREY FISCHER • ILLUSTRATION BY KIM WILSON BRANDT

I RECENTLY BECAME A CERTIFIED OPEN WATER DIVER DURING A vacation on the Big Island of Hawaii. Although I couldn't avoid a certain anxiety at the thought of learning a whole new set of skills and behaviors—like breathing underwater—at the age of 54, the PADI training was so well-organized that before I knew it, I'd gotten my C-card and completed an additional dozen dives along the Kona coast. Enticed by stories of giant Manta Rays that might show up for a late night plankton feast, I set out for my first night dive.

Our guides had planned a twilight dive along the way that would include a swim through a small cave—another first. With a dozen dives in my log, getting my gear on was beginning to be less of a struggle. I was feeling more confident, so I decided to try using less weight since I'd been doing better with buoyancy control. Plus, I was impatient to join the ranks of those grizzled old divers who prided themselves on using minimal weight (and hardly any air, either). This was my first mistake.

Even though the sun was setting, the visibility was good and there was plenty to see: a huge Green Turtle sleeping under a ledge, free-swimming Yellowhead Moray Eels getting ready for the night's hunt, Rockmover Wrasses tossing fist-sized chunks of coral around. Finally, we reached the cave at 25 feet. The opening was shaped like a giant eye, about four feet high and eight feet wide. As soon as the surge carried us in I discovered that, even with my BC fully deflated, I was positively buoyant. While the weight I was packing might have kept me neutral at 40 feet and below, at this depth my wetsuit became more buoyant, and I had to work hard to avoid bouncing off the cave's roof. I was working so hard that I neglected to keep an eye on my pressure gauge. This was my second mistake.

When we reached the back wall of the cave and I *did* remember to take a look, I was surprised to discover I was down to 500 psi. I signaled the divemaster, and he gave me the sign to turn around and head for the boat, which I did.

But turning all 6'7" of me in a confined space without snagging a hose or a body part took some effort.

Relieved to be back in open water, I took another look at my gauge before heading for the boat. In a nightmare moment, I saw that the needle was all the way to the left. At the same time, I felt resistance as I tried to breathe through my regulator. The worst had happened. I was out of air. Fortunately, I'd rehearsed this exact scenario on one

of my check-out dives, and the situation felt strangely and reassuringly familiar. Having specific steps to follow left no room for uncontrolled fear. I made eye contact with the divemaster—who had followed me out of the cave—and drew my hand across my throat (the sign for "I'm out of air!"). He quickly handed me his alternate regulator, and we calmly ascended to the surface.

Back on the dive boat I felt a new appreciation for all the drills my instructor

had put me through during my open water training. I also understood several principals with new clarity: the advantage of precise buoyancy control, the importance of paying frequent attention to one's pressure gauge and the necessity of maintaining close proximity to another diver. I felt fortunate to have learned these lessons at 25 feet rather than at 100 feet.

Two days later I dove Suck-'em-Up, another site known for its caves. On this dive, I increased my weight and had no trouble maintaining neutral buoyancy. After almost an hour of swimming through caves and arches, watching scale-eating blennies, Scrawled Filefish and an almost invisible frogfish, I returned to the boat with air to spare.

What I learned:

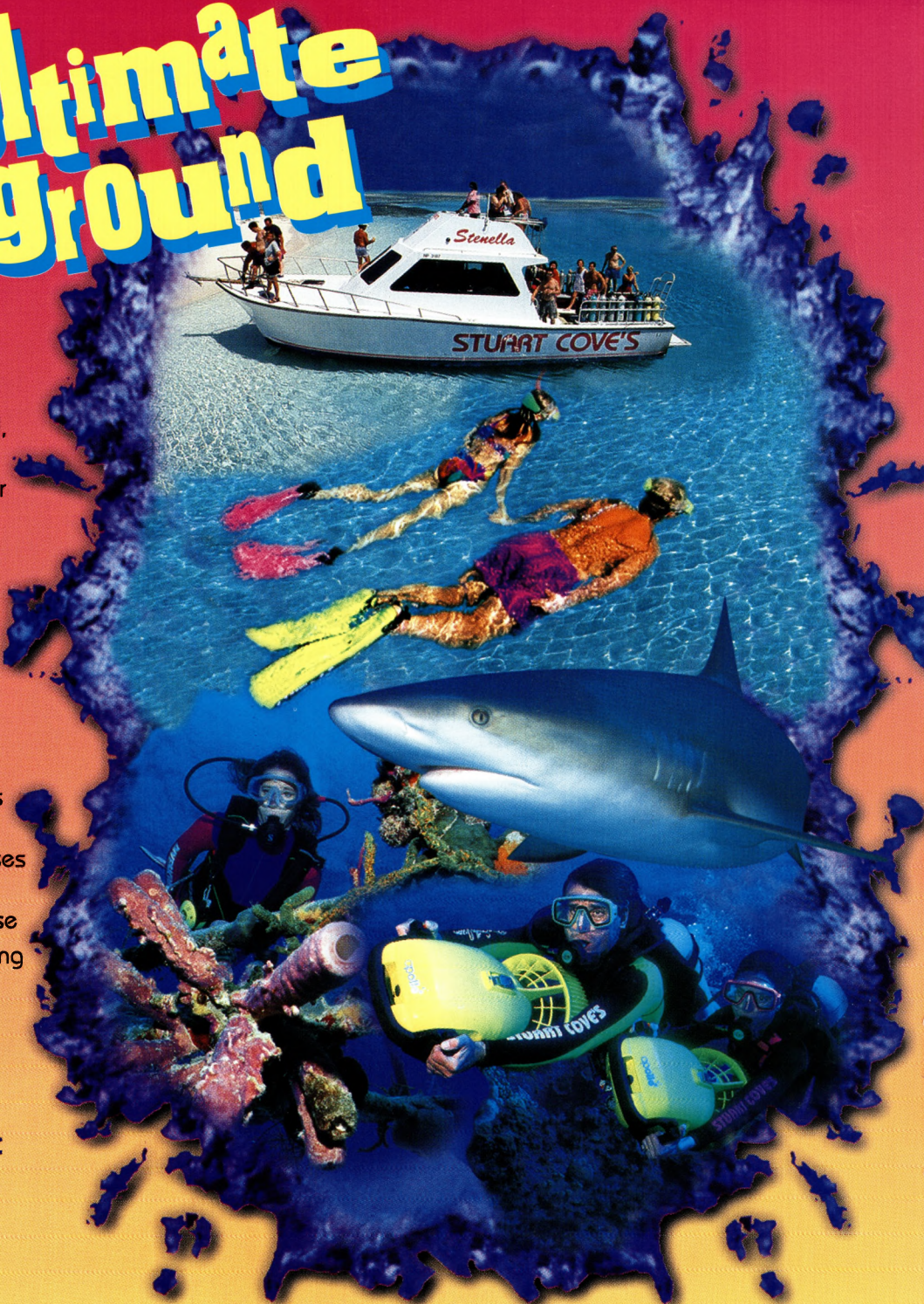
- When diving in caves at relatively shallow depths, make sure you're sufficiently weighted.
- Check gauges frequently, especially before entering environments that might require extra, air-burning effort.
- Maintain contact with a divemaster or buddy. 🐠



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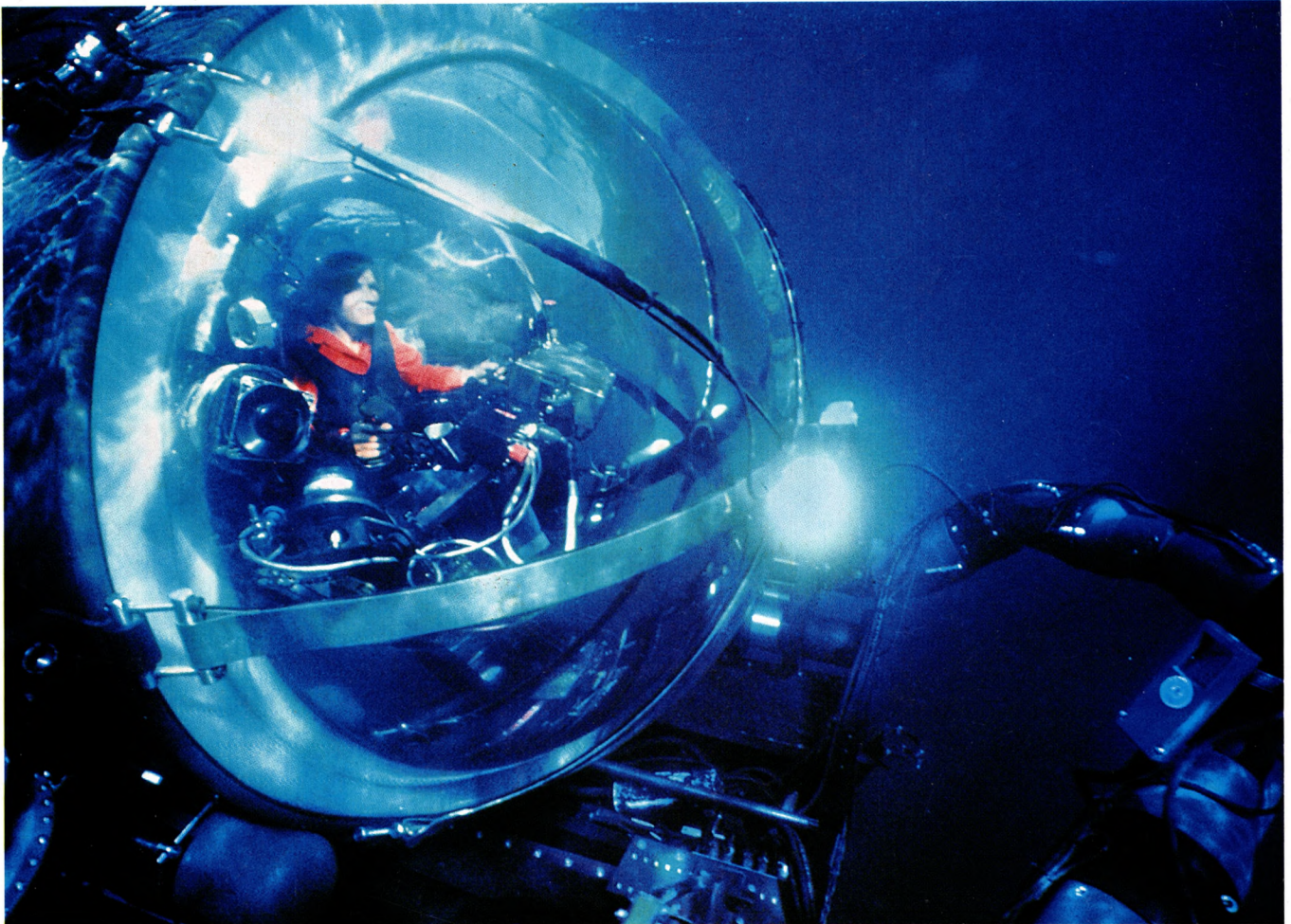
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
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